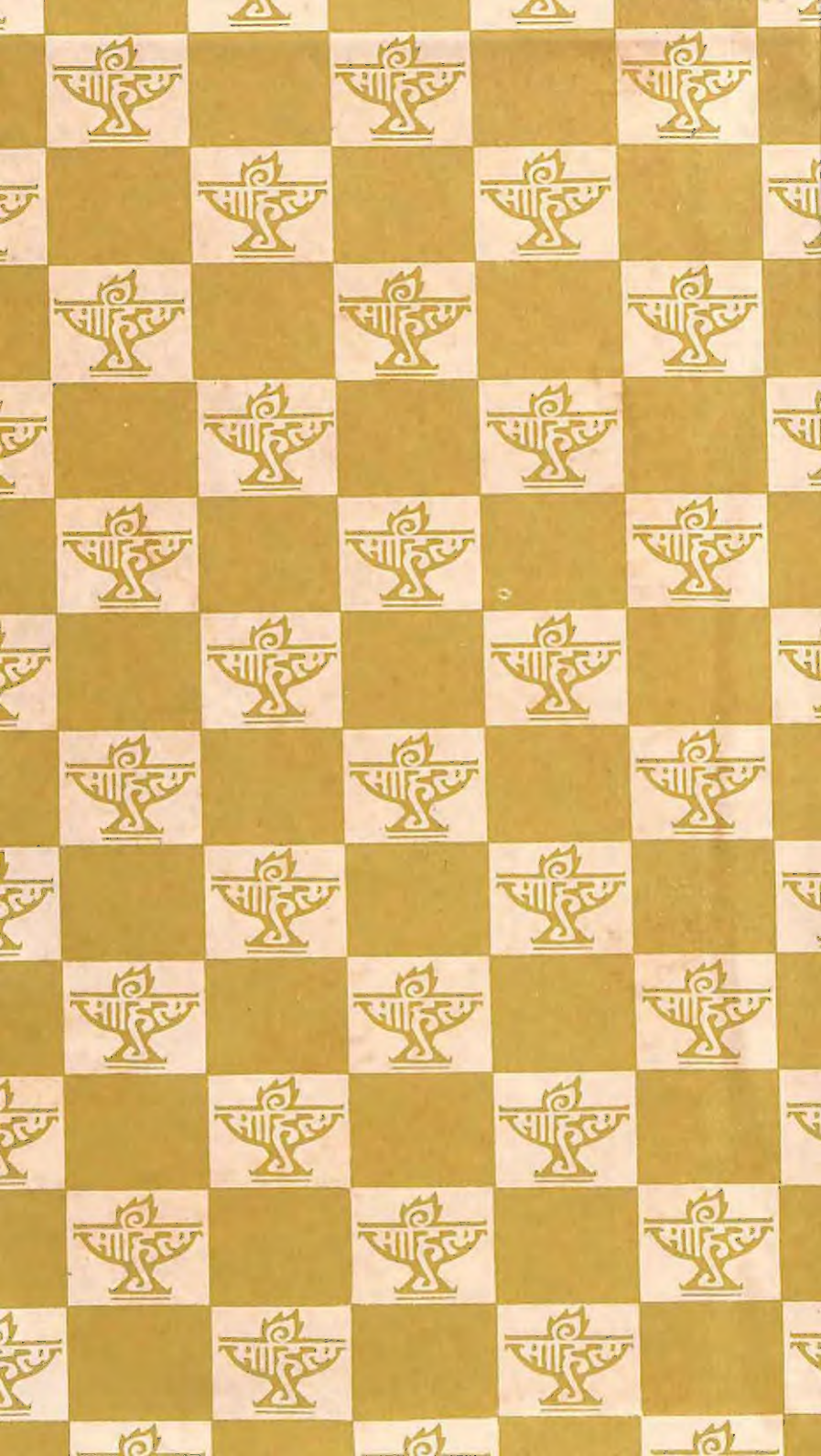




**Tolstoy  
and India**

**Alexander Shifman**





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## Tolstoy and India



Tobacco and  
other products



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**TOLSTOY  
AND  
INDIA**

by

**Alexander Shifman**

**Adviser to the Tolstoy State Museum**

*Translated from Russian by*

**A. V. Esaulov**



**Sahitya Akademi  
New Delhi**



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**First Published: 1969**

**Published by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, and  
printed at Leader Press, Allahabad.**



## Author's Preface

IN HIS famous essay *Asia's Reply to Tolstoy* Romain Rolland wrote :

"The young Indian Gandhi received from Tolstoy's hands that ever-burning light which the old Russian apostle cultivated in his soul, warmed with his love, fostered in his sorrow, and out of it he made the torch that illuminated India. Reflections of this light reached every part of the world."

Indeed, India is a country in which Tolstoy's artistic inheritance and humanistic thought are particularly loved. This is why the decision of the Sahitya Akademi to publish my book *Tolstoy and India* for the general Indian reader gives me great pleasure. This book is a part of my extensive research work, *Tolstoy and the East*, published in the USSR which shows the immense interest of the Russian writer in the peoples of Asia and Africa, and analyses his relationships with the artists and writers of these countries and the publication of his correspondence with them.

I heartily thank the translator and the Sahitya Akademi for their work and interest connected with the translation and publication of my book.

ALEXANDER SHIFMAN

## Translator's Note

I have undertaken the translation of this book because I think it is of great interest and I hope that an English rendering will make it possible to translate it further into various Indian languages, so that it will appeal to a large number of those people in whom Tolstoy took such an affectionate interest.

As far as possible, I have checked with the originals references to books, documents and articles written in languages other than Russian, but in some cases this has not been possible. English titles of Tolstoy's novels, stories and articles have been taken from the best-known renderings published in English.

I would like to express my thanks to Mrs. Lola Chatterji for her help in the work of translating and checking references.

A. V. ESAULOV

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## Friend of the Peoples of the East

LEO TOLSTOY, the great Russian writer, took an unusually great interest in the East. Tied, to use Gorky's phrase, by thousands of living, vibrating threads to the entire world, Tolstoy devoted very special attention to the peoples of Asia and Africa. This fact can be explained first of all by the historical conditions of the time in which he lived. The last decades of Tolstoy's life coincided with the beginning of the imperialist age and were marked by a rapid expansion of the Western powers in the East. Sympathizing with the enslaved peoples, Tolstoy could not but come forward in their defence. Thus were produced his numerous passionate articles against imperialism and colonialism, his direct messages to the peoples of Asia, and his warm appeals to the whole of mankind to support the struggle of the suppressed peoples.

Tolstoy's interest in the East was conditioned also by the originality of his deep and complex ideology. Having violently criticized the contemporary capitalist civilization and rejected the 'culture' of the rich and the well-fed, he often turned his thoughts to the sources of the culture of the ancient peoples and looked to them for the vivifying forces for the future renovation of mankind. He saw these forces in the patriarchal system of the Russian peasantry and in their attitude to the ethics of work. He saw, too, these forces in the social structure of the Eastern peoples, in their traditional peaceful disposition and industry, in their rich cultural inheritance. From here originated his great interest in the ancient philosophies and epics of the countries of Asia and Africa, in their literature, art, folklore, in all that which he respectfully called the Eastern wisdom.

Interest in the East and its ancient culture, along with his warm sympathy for the peoples of Asia and Africa, struggling for their freedom and independence, has been the ancient noble tradition of the Russian classical literature. This great interest in the East can be traced in the works of Pushkin and Gogol, Nekrasov and Shchedrin, and later to a still greater extent in the works of Chekhov and Gorky. Each of them, to the extent of his power, popularized the cultural treasures of the East in Russia, and stood up against foreign enslavement of the peoples of Asia and Africa.

In his attitude towards the East, Leo Tolstoy continued this glorious tradition. But the study of Eastern authors and contacts with representatives of the Eastern peoples occupied much more space in his life than in the lives of the other great writers. He was the first among Russian writers to establish personal contacts with the representatives of Asian and African countries and thus he threw open a living bridge between the Russian culture and the cultures of the Eastern peoples. Tolstoy's correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian publicists, Babu Bharati and Taraknath Das, with the Chinese scholars Ch'djan Chintun and Ku Hung Ming, with the Japanese men of letters Tokutomi Roka, Odzaki Koe, Konisi and many other writers, publicists, philosophers and social reformers of those countries as well as of Iran, Turkey and of the Arab countries, the arrival of many of them in Russia, in Yasnaya Polyana—all this helped in creating a wide exchange of cultural values and in popularizing Russian literature in the East.

With the rise of the imperialist era, Tolstoy was the first amongst the writers to stand up in defence of the peoples of Asia. His articles and appeals, 'What then must we do?', 'Two Wars', 'Message to the Italians', 'Think better of it', 'A Letter to a Chinaman', 'Letter to an Indian' and many others were widely circulated in the countries of the East and the West and aroused the peoples' conscience and awareness.



Finally, Tolstoy did more than any of his contemporaries to acquaint the Russian public with the wealth of Eastern cultures. He translated the folklore of their peoples, wrote articles about the doctrines of ancient thinkers and helped in the publication in Russia of books about the sages of the East. Popularization of Eastern cultures in Russia is one of the important aspects of the multifarious public activity of Tolstoy.

The Tolstoyan conception of the East had its strong and weak aspects. Like all the best Russian writers, he had a deep respect for the peoples of Asia and Africa who, at the dawn of mankind, created a high culture and civilization. Tolstoy never shared the arrogant attitude towards them of the apologists of the bourgeois 'progress', who saw in the cultures of the East only the phenomena of stagnation and decay. On the contrary, he often contrasted the spiritual values of the East with the radically incurable vices of the degenerate Western civilization. He was convinced that the Eastern peoples, among whom he included Russians, would show the path to a better future to the whole world.

But while making these comparisons, Tolstoy did not always correctly evaluate the history of the development of Eastern countries and their situation in his own time. He divided the world into two categories: the Western industrial countries 'corrupted' by their civilization and separated from their agricultural roots or what he called 'bread labour' and the agricultural countries of the East which retained patriarchal forms of life and did not yield to the temptations of civilization. According to Tolstoy only those peoples who carried on the patriarchal forms of life could be the repository of original culture, true 'moral' principles and the 'Eastern immobility'. By this he means the economic and cultural backwardness, and undeveloped social relations which retained that priceless characteristic which in his opinion the countries of Asia and Africa should preserve in order not to find themselves in the same desperate situation of the Western industrial countries. This was the

fundamental idea in Tolstoy's appeals to the Eastern peoples: to keep aloof from the modern countries, to retain the ancient patriarchal way of life, to live according to the law of the Buddha and Confucius.

This conviction of Tolstoy's developed out of his passionate hatred for 'bourgeois progress' of the Western world, out of his passionate belief that mankind was not condemned to develop only through the sufferings of capitalist civilization, but that another path was possible. He visualized the future of the peoples of the East as a slow patriarchal life without rapid industrial development, without wars and destruction of human lives, to a life according to the preachings of ancient teachers of religions. But Tolstoy was forgetting that such a life not only did not exist in his time but never had existed in the East as it had never existed in Russia. The idyll of the ancient patriarchal life was one of the Russian writer's most beautiful illusions, and the subsequent development of Asia and Africa has proved his inconsistency.

But while realizing the limitations of Tolstoy's conception of the East, one should not forget that on the whole his humanistic conception was advanced and progressive. Tolstoy's criticism of bourgeois civilization and particularly his denunciation of imperialism and colonialism were of very great importance and to a large extent are true also in our days.

What is the place of the Tolstoy tradition in the world of today? What influence did it have on the cultures of the peoples of the East?

Today many public men are inclined to deprecate Tolstoy's importance for our time. Some of them claim that the work of the author of *War and Peace* is obsolete and does not correspond to the 'dynamic' requirements of the 'atomic century'. Other bourgeois ideologists praise Tolstoy to the skies but at the same time distort his real character. They praise the weak aspects of Tolstoy's ideology and thereby try to soften the force of his criticism of the world

of self-interest and violence.

The general purpose of such interpretations of Tolstoy consists in trampling down in the conscience of man that high socio-ethical purpose, that spirit of humanism, the love of freedom and fraternity among the peoples which form the living soul of the inheritance of the Russian artist. The ideologists of imperialism do not accept the author of *War and Peace* because of his condemnation of aggressive war which even today rings true. In the same manner they do not accept the author of *Anna Karenina* with its passionate denunciation of false morality, nor the author of *Resurrection* with his pitiless criticism of State violence, nor the author of the articles 'Nikolay Palkin', 'What then must we do?', 'I cannot be silent', 'Letter to an Indian' and other passionate articles and appeals.

An acute ideological struggle is in progress, also, regarding the question of Tolstoy's importance for the East. Again, there are people who affirm that Tolstoy is important for mankind not as a brilliant artist, but only as a teacher of dogma and a prophet. Facts, however, do not prove such affirmations. Tolstoy is close to the peoples of the East both by his artistic work and his humanism.

Of extremely great importance to the literatures of the East is the artistic experience of Tolstoy, his sober realism, his great ability to disclose the inner life of people and the mechanics of social relations. The writers of the East, on account of the special circumstances of the development of their peoples and consequently of the great influence of the traditions of their national literatures, perhaps felt to a smaller extent than the writers of the West the direct impact of Tolstoy the artist, and used his artistic discoveries to a smaller measure. But by and large his beneficial influence on the literatures of the East cannot be doubted; it increased with the growth and development of realism in the literature of Asia and Africa.

The writers of the East are imbued with Tolstoy's broad humanistic conception, by his life-affirming compassion and



his faith in the spiritual forces of man. At the same time they tend to assimilate those ideas and themes which are closer to them. Here, first of all, one must mention the pacifist theme, which is so powerfully developed in Tolstoy's works and then the village problems and, in particular, the theme of the landless peasantry, and finally, the 'family' theme worked out on the basis of the recognition of women's right to love and happiness. This latter problem which is so particularly evident in the East found its reflection in a series of literary works from Asia and Africa and sometimes with direct echoes from *Anna Karenina*.

Tolstoy's innovations in the field of artistic forms have great importance for Eastern literatures. In his rejection of obsolete canons, the creation of new artistic genres, the convergence of the language of literature to that of the people and in his fine mastery of characterization, delineation of landscape and composition, the writers of the East have learnt from him. The fruits of this study are not always as visible as they are in Western literatures because in the works of the writers of the East they are reflected through the distinctive characters of their national traditions, but the fruitfulness of this study has been testified to by the greatest artists of the East, such as Rabindranath Tagore, Prem Chand, Lu Sin, Mao Dun, Mahmed Taimur, Nazim Khikmet and others. At the same time, for some literatures, particularly for the young literatures of Africa, the experience of Tolstoy as the novelist, as the author of short folk stories with their simple, direct language and utmost clarity of composition, is of great importance.

The writers of the East as well as of the West learn from Tolstoy to express the truth of life and this is probably the best lesson they learn from the creative method of Tolstoy.

Tolstoy's statements against imperialism, colonialism and racial discrimination have great importance for the countries of Asia and Africa. His articles and appeals on

this theme touched the most acute and actual problems, expressed the most intimate aspirations of oppressed peoples and therefore enjoyed particular success.

It is necessary to stress that Tolstoy was not the only writer who in the 19th and early 20th centuries raised his voice against aggressive wars and colonial exploitation. Almost all progressive writers of the world, including the best writers of Russia, struggled against imperialism in its various forms. However, none of them penetrated so deeply into the life of distant peoples, associated so intimately with them or studied them so intently and with such interest as Leo Tolstoy did. The uniqueness of his anti-imperialist accusation consisted in the fact that he did not merely stand against imperialism in general, but against its concrete manifestations in the various parts of the world. He condemned the policy of the British colonial power in India, of the French in Indo-China, of the Belgians in the Congo, of the Italians in Abyssinia, of the Americans in China, Cuba and the Philippines. He always spoke on these problems with an excellent knowledge of the circumstances and the situation of the peoples defended by him; which is why his publicistic works are so concrete and lively. Tolstoy was an unyielding opponent of world imperialism. That is why the politicians of colonialism, and among them Theodore Roosevelt, made such violent attacks on him.

Stefan Zweig in his book *Leo Tolstoy* wrote: "Wherever in our days force is condemned, be it a weapon, a law or a seemingly sacred establishment which is to protect something under one or another pretext, be it the nation, the religion, the race, the property; everywhere where humane ethics opposes the shedding of blood, does not want to justify the crimes of war and recognize a military victory as the judgement of God; everywhere every moral revolutionary still receives today the authoritative and zealous, the brotherly, encouraging support of Tolstoy."

These words contain one of the answers to the ques-

tion asked earlier. Tolstoy is alive! His humane work, which never grows old, helps the working humanity to live, struggle and to create a new world.



## Ancient Teachings

### I

AMONG COUNTRIES of the East which attracted Tolstoy's attention, India occupies a special place. This is explained by the originality of its ancient religion, philosophy and popular literature and art—in many respects close to the ideology of the Russian writer—and by the peculiarities of the socio-political situation of India at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, which made many Indian public men approach Tolstoy for help and moral support. Not in any other country of the East had he so many correspondents as in India.

Tolstoy became interested in the situation in India for the first time in 1857-58, during the nation-wide uprising of Indians against the British rulers. The young writer followed with tense attention the heroic struggle of the Indians against their centuries-old enemies. With bitterness he read in newspapers about the siege of Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow and felt keenly the reports about the atrocities perpetrated by the British on the peaceful population. And when, in March 1858, the news reached Petersburg about the cruel suppression of the Mutiny and of the capture of the town of Lucknow, the last stronghold of the mutineers, by the troops of General Campbell, Tolstoy branded the situation as the 'brutality of Great Britain'.<sup>1</sup> After a week he noted a new cruelty of the suppressors—the massacre of 94 Indian patriots carried out by a detachment under the command of the British Captain Osborn. "Good God, they

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1. 48.11. Reference to quotations from works, letters, diaries and notebooks of Tolstoy is given according to the complete collection of his works published in 90 volumes in the U.S.S.R. The first figure refers to the volume and the next to the page number of that publication.

calmly shot ninety-four men," he wrote in his notebook with bitter irony.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties, during the period of his spiritual crisis, Tolstoy turned to Indian philosophy, to the ancient monuments of Indian culture, the Vedas and the Upanishads, to the very rich epos and folklore of India in search of an answer to the questions of the meaning of life and of the destination of man that were agitating him. From now on and up to his death he devoted much attention to Indian culture and popularized it in Russia.

The end of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century saw an animated correspondence between Tolstoy and scholars, writers and publicists of India. This correspondence which is not yet well known shows the breadth and multiplicity of Tolstoy's interests relating to India, and his warm aspiration to know the country and its culture. The letters of the Indians testify to the great popularity Tolstoy enjoyed in India and show how great was the significance of his work for the Indian intelligentsia and for the simple people, how passionately they looked forward to the writings of the Russian writer in defence of their oppressed country. Tolstoy's correspondence with the Indians shows the powerful influence and the great authority he had in all countries and particularly in the East.

We shall show later on that Tolstoy's views on India had their strong and weak points connected with his ideology. But there can be no doubt that he was led in his activity by noble impulses, that he deeply sympathized with the enslaved Indian people and admired their ancient culture. And when he looks over the contemporary world in search of countries and of people which are destined to give mankind a new message, he rests his gaze on Russia and on India at the same time, convinced that its gifted and industrious people will make a great contribution to the common treasure-house of human culture.

## II

Tolstoy studied Indian culture over many years. In his Yasnaya Polyana library are kept many books and journals about India with his marks.<sup>3</sup>

In the books about Tolstoy there are references to the fact that the writer turned to Indian philosophy and religion very early. Romain Rolland, for instance, in his book *Tolstoy's Life* wrote that the nineteen-year old Tolstoy became acquainted with a Buddhist lama in 1847 in a Kazan hospital and from this lama he learnt the essence of the fundamental laws of all the ancient religions—the law of non-resistance to evil by force. Rolland attributes a great importance to this fact and relates to it the young Tolstoy's joining the Faculty of Eastern languages at the Kazan University.

E. I. Sytina (Chikhacheva) with whom Tolstoy associated at the end of the fifties said in her memoirs that at that time in Moscow he was friendly with two educated young girls—Olga Kireeva (who became a writer) and Aleksandra Chicherina, the sister of the well-known publicist and historian V. N. Chicherin who 'were interested in problems of Buddhism'. According to E. I. Sytina, Tolstoy often stayed to talk with the intelligent young ladies and they introduced him to the foundations of Indian philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

However, this early interest in Indian philosophy does not seem to exceed the natural curiosity which distin-

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3. The literature about India preserved in the Yasnaya Polyana library has been described by V. F. Bulgakov in his article "Books about India in the library of L. N. Tolstoy", *Short Reports of the Institute of Oriental Studies*, Vol. XXXI, pp. 45-46, 1959. A survey of Indian political periodicals contained in that library is given in N. M. Goldberg's article "Indian Journals in the Yasnaya Polyana library as one of the sources of the study of the national liberation movement in India", *Soviet Vostochnoe obozrenie*, 1955, N4, pp. 116-130.

4. See *Literary Inheritance*, N. 37-38, Moscow, 1939, pp. 404-405.

guished the young Tolstoy. He began a thorough study of Indian philosophy and epos only in seventies and eighties, when he was preparing a series of books about Eastern thinkers for publication. In this period he was interested in Buddhism and in other teachings of India and this is testified to by a big list of publications in Tolstoy's notebook dated 9 January 1873.<sup>5</sup> The following books are mentioned: P. Percival, *The Land of the Veda* (London, 1854); D.A. Dubois, *The Description of the Character, Behaviour and Customs of the Peoples of India* (London, 1817); John W. Kaye, *Administration of the East Indian Company, History of Progress in India* (London, 1853); H. T. Colebrooke, *Sketches on Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus* (London, 1853).

It has not been established whether Tolstoy had found and read these books, but the list itself indicates the breadth of his interest in India, its history and culture.

Buddhism attracted Tolstoy's attention, along with other Eastern religions, as a teaching containing humanitarian ideas of peace, good and love. That is why he refers to it favourably in his articles, diaries and letters.

According to the opinion of Soviet and progressive Indian research workers<sup>6</sup>, Buddhism arose in the sixth cen-

5. 48.101.503.

6. See: A. Osipov, *A Short Survey of the History of India upto the X Century*, Moscow, 1948; A. M. Deborin, 'Materialism and Dialectics in Ancient Indian Philosophy', *Voprosy Filosofi*, 1956 N1; A. N. Kochetov, 'Origin of Buddhism', in the year-book of the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism, Vol. 1. Moscow-Leningrad, 1957; G. F. Aleksandrov, 'History of Sociological Doctrines', *The Ancient East*, Moscow, 1959; Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, Moscow, 1955; S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vols. 1 and 2, Moscow, 1956-57; S. Chatterjee and D. Datta, *Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. Moscow; 1955; Manoranjan Roy, *History of Indian Philosophy. Greek and Indian Philosophy*, translation from Bengali, Moscow, 1958.



tury B.C. as a reaction against the false teaching of the Brahman-priests who were defending the slaves-owners' interests; and, compared to their teaching, it was a progressive phenomenon. It reflected the discontent of the slaves and of the peasantry ruined by the existing order and expressed, although in an original way, their aspirations for equality and for a life without fear and humiliations.

The Buddha's teaching first of all attracted many strata of the population of India by not justifying the caste system and social inequalities of the people. "The denial of the divine origin of castes," wrote the Soviet research scholar G. G. Aleksandrov, "and the open access into Buddhist communities of all levels of the population, except the slaves, the critical attitude towards the Vedas and towards the teaching of the Brahmans about the transmigration of souls tied with the future punishment for faults in this world, the appeal for moral liberation in this life, the adaptation of some aspects of popular religious beliefs—all this found a response in the hearts of simple people exhausted under the political and religious yoke of Brahmanism."<sup>7</sup>

The teaching of equality was what chiefly attracted Tolstoy in Buddhism. All men originate from one mother-nature, all are equal before her, affirmed the Buddha. Born a prince or a slave, rich or poor, a nobleman or a commoner, all live under the same sun, all are equal before the face of nature. If any are privileged in this society, it is because of their actions and deeds rather than illustrious origin or the possession of wealth. Be kind, modest, hard-working, follow the command of reason and nature, perfect yourself and you will find wisdom and distinction and riches.

Another attractive feature of Buddhist ideology for Tolstoy was the negation of God as the almighty supernatural being dominating men. For many centuries the Brahman priests justified the inequality prevailing in the world by reference to God and to his cruel laws which sup-

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7. G. F. Aleksandrov, *History of Sociological Teachings*.

posedly predetermined once and for all the destiny of men. The God, Brahma, they affirmed, ordered the master or the lord to rule and the slave to obey, the rich man to spend his life in idleness and the poor to work for him. God divided men into castes, raised the rich and ordered the poor to suffer. And nothing can be changed in this world, because God is almighty. The mystic belief in the divinity, in Brahma, is the foundation of the ideology of Brahmanism.

Buddhism rejects this belief. The Buddhists were, of course, idealistic both in cognition and in the interpretation of the world, they affirmed the priority of the spirit over matter, but they rejected the myth of the omnipotent divinity since it does not stand up to the proof of reason and the senses of men. This commanded the respect of Tolstoy who in his attitude to Christianity and the other religions denied the idea of a personal God and the belief in mysticism and miracles.

Finally, the ethical code of Buddhism proved to be in consonance with Tolstoy's ideas. This code, prohibited murder, violence; it affirmed love for fellowmen, non-resistance to evil, estrangement from the outer world and the inseparability of the cognition of one's own soul. The Buddhist teaching of Nirvana, i e., of the highest stage of beatitude which is reached by a constant striving towards good and moral self-perfection, was akin to the Tolstoyan idea of moral perfection as the only infallible path for the achievement of the personal and the general good.

All this predetermined Tolstoy's interest in Buddhism as well as for the arts and folklore of the people of India based on this teaching.

The first mention of the Buddha's teaching in the works of Tolstoy dates back to 1879 which is the period of the turning point in the ideology of the writer. Having narrated in his *Confession* about his agonizing spiritual searches, along with the opinions of other thinkers he quoted also the legend about the Buddha who searched for the meaning of life. The story related by Tolstoy of the young happy

prince Sakyamuni who pondered over the dark puzzle of death and in the face of it came to the thought of a good life, was meant to support the fundamental idea which dominated him at that time: man cannot live thoughtlessly but must have an aim in view, must remember his main purpose in life. Already Tolstoy himself saw that purpose in the selfless service to the people, in the striving towards general good and in the constant effort towards moral self-perfection.

In 1866 N. N. Strakhov sent Tolstoy the French edition of *Lalita Vistara* by Philippe Edouard Foucaux (*Annales du Musée Guimet*, Vol. 4). It made a great impression on him.<sup>8</sup> From that time onwards Tolstoy studied the literature about Buddhism with increasing care and referred to its teaching in the articles, diaries and letters, more frequently.

According to him, the postulate, "Do as you would be done by", pervaded Buddhism. By his interpretation the Buddhists profess the same ideas as he does, namely, that good and love are the main forces of life. They also profess the same ideas of mercy, of simple living and disregard for riches. Buddhism condemns wars, violence, hatred; it appeals for brotherhood and equality among the peoples. However, as in respect to Confucianism, at times Tolstoy took what he desired as the reality and did not notice the slave-owning basis of many Buddhist postulates.

Agreeing with the fundamental propositions of Buddhist ethics, Tolstoy at the same time rejected in Buddhism all that lowers man in declaring him to be the victim of suffering and all that leads to pessimism and despondency. Tolstoy's life-affirming compassion and deep faith in man and his spiritual forces constantly came into conflict with this aspect of Buddhism as well as of other religious systems. On 12 September 1884 he noted in his diary:

"I read Buddhism—the teaching. It is surprising. It is

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8. See letter to the editor M. M. Lederle, dated 25 October 1891 (66, 68).

the same teaching. The only mistake is to save oneself from life completely. Buddha did not save himself, but he saved the people. This he has forgotten. If there was nobody to save, there would be no life."<sup>9</sup>

Tolstoy resolutely rejects the later features and distortions which allowed the ruling classes and the hypocritical priests to use Buddhism for their own ends. Thus in 1904 in his article, "Think it over", directed against the Russo-Japanese war, Tolstoy strongly condemned the head of the Japanese Buddhists, Soyen Shaku, for supporting militaristic slogans of Imperialist Japan. "A Buddhist scholar," wrote Tolstoy with indignation, "commanding 800 monasteries, Soyen Shaku, explains that although Buddha did prohibit murder, he said that he would not be at rest until all living beings were united in the infinite, loving heart and therefore to bring to order things which are in disorder it is necessary to wage war and kill people."<sup>10</sup> Tolstoy regarded this attitude of the head of Japanese Buddhists as being extremely reactionary and criminal, and his arguments a scandalous distortion of true Buddhism.

Later on he noted similar distortions in the practice of the Buddhists of other countries.

"I read about Buddhism," he said to his secretary on 7 April 1908. "What a strange teaching: And how it had been distorted! Such an abstract teaching, the Nirvana, and all of a sudden the same worship of idols, heaven and hell. . . Absolutely the same superstitions as in Christianity. . ."<sup>11</sup>

Tolstoy strove to separate the "true" teaching of the Buddha from later distortions and to co-ordinate it with his own philosophical views.

### III

Taken up in these years by the idea of publication of popular books about the great philosophers of the past,

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9. 49.121.

10. 38.142.

11. N. N. Gusev, *Two Years with L. N. Tolstoy*, p. 130.



Tolstoy, at the beginning of 1886, planned to write a popular essay on the Buddha and at once set to work. He informed his wife about it: "From today I have begun to write on Buddha. He interests me very much."<sup>12</sup> However the essay remained unfinished; only a few drafts were made.

Apparently the work over it as well as on the essay on Confucius convinced the writer of the great difficulty and perhaps of the total impossibility of expounding the philosophical teaching not only in a small book but also of one in the form of a legend. Originally Tolstoy intended to write in an artistic form separately about each of the seven existing religions but, obviously, the complexity of this huge task scared him. Instead of several books, he later on planned to write one, and about this he informed his friend V. G. Chertkov in a letter at the beginning of 1886. But this intention, too, remained unfulfilled.

Tolstoy's essay on the Buddha has an interesting history.<sup>13</sup> During several years the writer A. G. Ertel and V. G. Chertkov worked over its completion. Tolstoy encouraged his helpers in all ways, supplied them with the necessary literature and gave useful advice. But the results of their activity did not satisfy him, and this work was not published during the life-time of Tolstoy.<sup>14</sup> However, Tolstoy did not give up the idea of creating a popular book on Buddhism and later on he thrice came back to it. In 1905, he included in the first edition of *Book for Reading* his new short essay on Buddha<sup>15</sup>; in 1908, he rewrote it for the second edition of the collection and at the beginning of 1910 he wrote a foreword to the article by P. A. Boulanger, "Life and Teaching of Sidhartha Gautam, named Buddha, i.e. the Most Perfect".<sup>16</sup> This introduction, along with P. A.

12. 83.571.

13. It is given in the commentaries by N. K. Gudzii (25,887-890).

14. V. G. Chertkov published his version in 1916 in the journal *Edinenie* (1 and 2). The introduction and the first two chapters are by Tolstoy.

15. 41.96-111.

16. 90.86-92.

Boulanger's article, was published in the journal *Life for Everybody* (1910, No. 3). Later on Boulanger's article was published by "Posrednik" in the form of a separate pamphlet.<sup>17</sup>

The first version of the essay on Buddha (1886) is interesting because it contains not only a poetical account of the traditional legend of Sakya Muni's birth, but also information about India, its history and philosophy. Already in this first incomplete sketch the writer's deep respect for these distant peoples and their culture is apparent.

'If', Tolstoy began his narration, 'you go from the centre of Russia towards the place where the sun rises in winter to a distance of about ten thousand versts<sup>18</sup> from us, after passing Saratov, Uralsk, the Kirgiz Kaya desert, Tashkent, Bukhara you will come to high snow mountains. These mountains are the highest in the world. Go over these mountains and you will come into the Indian land.

'The Indian land is one-third Russian: but the land there is fertile and warm—there is no winter; so that thrice the number of people is fed there than in Russia: it is considered that the number of people in India is nearly 240 million. Nowadays the Hindus are ruled by the British: 150 years ago the English conquered India. Before that time the Hindus lived in freedom and were ruled by their own kings.'<sup>19</sup>

Further he continues in the same simple popular language to describe the moral laws of the Hindus which, according to him, were of a very high character. These laws found an illuminating embodiment in the most ancient monument of Indian culture—the Vedas:

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17. P. A. Bulgakov, "Life and Teaching of Sidharta Gautama, named Buddha, i.e. the most Perfect" edited by L. N. Tolstoy, published by "Posrednik", Moscow, 1911.
  18. Verst=Russian old measure, equal to 3500 feet (Translator's note).
  19. Here and further on Tolstoy's essay "Siddhartha, named Buddha, i.e., the Holy" is quoted according to the 25th Volume of the Complete Works, pp. 540-543.

"In one of the ancient books it is written that men must refrain from murder not only of men, but also of all that is living; refrain from anger, adultery, drunkenness, gluttony, laziness and falsehood; refrain from blame of others and must be humble, abstemious, honest, truthful, pure and must return good for evil." All this, affirmed Tolstoy, the ancient Hindus carefully fulfilled and observed.

However, the centuries passed by and the deep humane philosophy with its fundamental teaching of the Vedas did not remain at its spiritual and moral height; it was distorted by the self-seeking Brahman-priests who began to adapt it to suit the interests of the rich and the powerful. The priests "introduced sacrifices, liturgies, ablutions, purifications, introduced the division of men into different castes". The Brahman-priests taught that by offering sacrifices one could expiate any evil deed and thus they connived at evil. They advised people to retire to the solitude of the forest and by fasting and self-inflicted suffering to exhaust their flesh. This is contrary to man's nature. At the same time many other distortions arose which finally reduced to nothing the high teaching of the ancient Hindus.

Further on, Tolstoy gives an account of the legend of the Buddha and the style of the narration changes. The story begins artistically about the life of a man and this story remains in many respects the typical Russian folk tale on which the writer was working at this time. Just as in those stories, in the legend of the Buddha there is no trace of the mysticism, of the other world, of the irrational, there is nothing divine—the action takes place on the earth, among living men, in the actual conditions of ancient Indian life. In Tolstoy's legend the Buddha is an ordinary man who mediates on the existing evils and wants to eliminate them.

The legend comes to an abrupt end. Judging by the drafts which remain it was intended to show the most humane actions of the Buddha, his embracing of the simple life and his coming closer to the people. And there is no doubt (this is borne out by the manuscripts) that all this

would have been told not in a dry moralizing tone, but in an attractive form full of imagery.

The essence of the Buddha's teaching is expressed in is characterized by its artistic and poetical style. It was written twenty years later in 1906 for the *Book for Reading*. Here, unlike the first sketch, there is nothing about India and its people; only the substance of Buddhism is given, but the tone of deep respect for the inquisitive mind and depth of thought of the sages of ancient India is retained.

The essence of the Buddha's teaching is expressed in the following way in the essay:

"Everything corporeal is temporary and has to be destroyed. As long as man is tied down to his body he is subject to suffering, destruction, death. How to free oneself of this? As long as the soul is tied to the flesh, it wants to live, but life with its unsatisfied desires and the fear of death produces suffering. Therefore, it is necessary to destroy the bad desires of the flesh."<sup>20</sup>

By destruction of the bad desires of the flesh Tolstoy did not at all imply ascetic restraint and renunciation of earthly joys. On the contrary he again criticised the false Brahman-priests who distorted the Buddha's teaching and also preached purification through suffering. According to Tolstoy the evil thoughts and desires were destroyed by strict observance of those moral rules which form the basis of the teaching of Buddhism and which the writer expounded to the same "religion of good" which forms the foundation-stone of Tolstoyism and is able to solve all the contradictions of man. "The mortification of our flesh is unnecessary, the most important thing is the purification of the soul from evil desires."—this is how Tolstoy formulated the basic ethical law of Buddhism.

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20. "Buddha" from the *Book for Reading* by Tolstoy, Moscow, 1906, pp. 6-7. This book has been preserved in the Yasnaya Polyana library.



Besides the two essays already mentioned in which Tolstoy expounded his understanding of the principles of Buddhist morals, he wrote, in 1894, a longer legend "Karma" on the same theme.<sup>21</sup> "Karma," he explained in his note, "is the Buddhist belief that not only the constitution of the character of each man but his entire destiny in this life is the consequence of his deeds in his previous life and that the good or the evil of our future life in the same way will depend on our efforts in this life to avoid evil and accomplish good."<sup>22</sup>

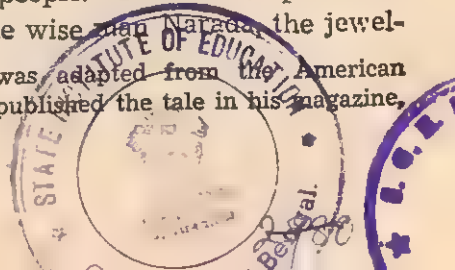
What attracted the writer in this tale was not this belief which he did not share, but the idea of the common good. "This little tale," he wrote in the introduction, "appealed to me very much on account of its naivety and its depth. Particularly good in it is the explanation of that truth, which lately has been obscured from various sides, that liberation from evil and acquisition of good is obtained only by one's own efforts, and that there is no other way and can be no such way with the help of which one could reach one's own or the general good. This explanation is particularly good in that it shows at the same time the fact that the good of a single man is real good only when it is a common good. As soon as the robber who was climbing out of hell wished good for himself alone, his good ceased to be good and he lost hold and fell."<sup>23</sup>

The idea that outside the common good there cannot be happiness for the individual was expressed by Tolstoy in describing the misadventures of the rich jeweller Pandu, of his servant Magaduta, the poor farmer Devala, the robber Kandata and other characters. They all wanted good for themselves, but they obtained it only when they acted unselfishly for the good of all people. Those who perceived this truth as, for instance, the wise man Narada, the jewel-

21. 31.47-56. The subject was adapted from the American writer Paul Carus who published the tale in his magazine, *The Open Court*.

22. 31.47.

23. *ibid*.



ler Pandu, the peasant Devala, found peace, happiness and rest; but the others as, for instance, the servant Magaduta and the robber Kandata, perished in suffering.

Also another story, of a later date, of Tolstoy, "This is you" is connected with the Buddhist idea of the 'general good'.<sup>24</sup> A cruel tyrant ordered his adviser, a sage, to invent a terrible punishment for his enemy. But the sage converted the king for a moment into that man whom he wanted to execute and by doing so he convinced him that "the whole of mankind is formed of one being", and the tyrant's eyes were opened.

Two months before his death Tolstoy once again came back to the legend about the Buddha. In his diary for September 1910, we find a sketch of a subject which is certainly very close to the legend of the Buddha. Here are some fragments:

There was a young king, fair, healthy and rich. who had everything. He had nothing to wish for and he became bored. And he saw only the young and the healthy. He went for a walk and he saw an old man. What is this? He saw a dead body: What is this? Shall I also become such? And will it also happen to me? Yes. He came home more and more frustrated. Why continue to live?

He was told: There is a wise old man, ask him. He quietly left home again and went to the old man. Along the way he heard a worker singing a song.

"Why are you gay?"

"I am very gay. Things couldn't be better."

"And you are always like this?"

"Always. I have everything, they feed me well,

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24. 34.138-140. Tolstoy's friend A. B. Goldenveizer has noted in his diary in early July, 1903: "Lev Nikolaevich is thinking of relating in an artistic way the Buddhist teaching "This is you" ("Ju Twan asi"), the meaning of which is that in each man and in his actions one can always recognize oneself." (A. B. Goldenveizer, *Near Tolstoy*, Vol. I, p. 11).

the work is easy. I earn enough, I sing songs, I have no worries, I play with my friends. . ."

He came to the old man. He told him how he was puzzled especially after he had seen the old man and the dead body. But the worker sings. What to do?<sup>25</sup>

Further (according to Tolstoy's story) the old man advised the king to love all men, to serve them, and then he would acquire peace and happiness.

"How to do it?"

"Leave the palace, go to that man and stay with him as his apprentice. Learn to work. Do thus during the summer and then come to me and tell me how you have lived. If well, remain there; if badly, go back to your palace."

The king trusted the old man, went home, and told his wife that he wanted to leave the palace and live in the village and work there.

The wife did not agree. The king told her: "I cannot live like this any longer, I shall go and do as the old man has told me." The wife said: "Go." The king went, spent the summer and learnt to work, and began to help others and when he came to the old man, he said that he felt better than ever before and he began to sing songs.<sup>26</sup>

This sketch was not developed. Death prevented Tolstoy from embodying his intention in an artistic form.

In India and in some other countries the development of their distinctive arts is linked to the centuries-old history of Buddhism. Tolstoy was very much interested in it. In his diaries of 1896 he wrote about the Buddhist poetry and architecture as outstanding creations of man's genius and contrasted them with the false art of the contemporary bourgeois world.

"Everybody appreciates the beauty of ancient Indian and Greek temples. The same (high level) of artistic

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25. 52.210.

26. 58.211.

achievement was reached in certain literary works—in the Buddha's teachings, in Sakya Muni's poetry."<sup>27</sup>

Tolstoy spoke highly of the monuments of the Buddhist epos. Later on he included in his collections for reading several sayings from the ancient collection of Buddhist ethics, *Dhammapada*<sup>28</sup>, and also a series of aphorisms from the famous Buddhist Sutt. The books *Sutta-Nipata*<sup>29</sup> and *The Buddhist Sutts*<sup>30</sup>, still preserved in Yasnaya Polyana, served him as the source for the above mentioned aphorisms.

Tolstoy read a lot about Buddhism. Besides the books mentioned above, the work by the Russian Indologist I. P. Minaev, *Buddhist—Investigation and Materials* (1887), has been preserved in the library of Yasnaya Polyana; so also *Buddha. His Life, Teaching, Community* by the German Orientalist G. Oldenburg, in Russian translation by A. Achkasov (1905)<sup>31</sup>; *The Word of Buddha* (1907) by the Indian scholar Bhiku Nyanatiloka; *The Buddhist Catechism for the Introduction into the Teaching of Buddha Gautama* (1908) by Subhadra Bhikschu; *The Gospel of Buddha* (1895) by Paul Carus and many others.

In the Tolstoy library one can also find artistic litera-

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27. 53.112.

28. Tolstoy took these sayings from the Book, *The Path to Truth—Sayings of Buddhist Moral Wisdom*, translation and introduction by N. Gerasimov, Moscow, 1898.

29. *Sutta-Nipata*, Collection of fables and teachings. Buddhist Canonical book translated from Pali into English by Fausboll; translation into Russian with introduction by N. I. Gerasimov, Moscow, 1899.

30. *Buddhist Sutts*, in the translation from Pali by T. W. Rhys Davids; Russian translation by N. I. Gerasimov, Moscow, 1900.

31. From this book Tolstoy borrowed the legend about Prince Kunal whom the queen deprived of his lovely eyes. Retold by Tolstoy, this legend entered in the second edition of the *Book for Reading* under the name of "Kunal's Eyes" (see *Circle of Reading*, 2nd edition, Revised and enlarged, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1912).



ture about the Buddha and the Buddhism, as, for instance, Edwin Arnold's famous poem *The Light of Asia*, which Tolstoy read for the first time in 1887 and then again in two Russian translations in verse<sup>32</sup> and the poetic work by Paul Carus, *Nirvana* (1896). Among the works on Buddhism and its history read by Tolstoy one can also quote the Russian translation from Sanskrit of the well-known book *The Moon Light of Sankya—The Truth* (1900); *The Grains picked up on the Buddhist Fields* (1897) by the American Orientalist Lafcadio Hearne; *Did Buddha Exist?* by the French scholar Leon de Roni; three books by the German scholar Bruno Freydank: *A Small Buddhist Catechism* (1904), *The Buddhist Forget-me-not* and *The Horrors of Christian Civilization* (1907), composed in the form of letters by an imaginary Tibetan Lama, and many others.<sup>33</sup> Some of these works as, for instance, a part of the book *The Horrors of Christian Civilisation* were, on Tolstoy's suggestion, translated into Russian.<sup>34</sup> About some he expressed his opinion in letters to their authors and also to the Orientalists with whom he was in contact. Both Russian and foreign Orientalists admit that Tolstoy was one of the greatest authorities on Buddhism in Russia.

#### IV

From Tolstoy's diaries and letters it is obvious that he was interested not only in Buddhism, but also in more recent philosophical teachings of India, up to his own contemporary thinkers.

Among the Indian philosophers of the medieval period he studied more thoroughly Shankara and, among the more recent, Ramakrishna Paramhansa and his Pupil Swami

32. Translations by A. M. Fedorov (Moscow, 1895), and I. M. Sabashnikov (St. Peresbourg, 1895).

33. For a complete description of the literature on Buddhism in the Yasnaya Polyana library see the article by V. F. Bulgakov, "Books about India in the library of L. N. Tolstoy".

34. See the Journal, *Vegetarian Review*, 1910, Kier Nos. 5-10.

Vivekananda.

The idealist philosopher Shankara, who is dated in the eighth century by the majority of investigators, was one of the founders of the medieval mystic school of Vedanta who stood up against the materialistic and atheistic teachings of India of that time. Shankara considered Brahma, the world spirit, as the only reality and foundation of the world, and understood him as a mystical divinity. The visible world is only the manifestation of the spirit which creates it by its magic power of illusion, Maya.

Shankara's cognition theory was also idealistic. He affirmed that it was impossible to cognize the world because the absolute spiritual principle, the world soul or Atman, is not cognizable. One can approach truth only intuitively or in a state of ecstasy, which also like intuition is the highest form of man's consciousness; Shankara reviewed and developed many mystical conceptions of the ancient Indian books—the Upanishads.

There were some attractive traits in Shankara's views on man and society as well as in his philosophical activity. An outstanding thinker and scholar, he did not isolate himself in a forest refuge as many preachers of his time did, but he was an active reformer. He tried to achieve the unification of the country and the upsurge of its well-being.<sup>35</sup> Reflecting the interests of the ruling classes, Shankara did not speak against the caste-system; according to him the historically established division of society into the rich and the poor, into upper and lower castes reflected God's will and therefore was not to be altered. But the philosopher rose against the difference among the castes, against the neglect of the lower strata of society and affirmed that the service of Brahma was equally accessible to the monk and the slave.

Brought up on the patriarchal canons of Brahmanism, Shankara always remained under its influence. A deeply

35. The modern Indian progressive scholar Manoranjan Ray who worked on the history of philosophy characterised Shankara as the Ideologist of the rising bourgeoisie. See: M. Ray, *The History of Indian Philosophy*, p. 492.

pessimistic denial of the world with the idea of self-sacrifice and estrangement were at the basis of this thinker's philosophical system. His appeals to withdraw from reality, to deepen the cognition of one's own "self" were directed against the simple people's aspirations for a better life which were a concrete manifestation of their protests against oppression and deprivation of rights. At the same time Shankara's ethical teaching prohibited war and violence, advocated renunciation of luxury and riches and encouraged the aspirations towards the common good.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in his work *Indian Philosophy* expounds Shankara's ethics as follows:

"Right action is what embodies truth, and wrong that which embodies untruth. Whatever leads to a better future existence is good, and what brings about a worst form of existence evil... True peace and excellence lie not in self-assertion, not in individual striving for one's own good, but in offering oneself as a contribution to the true being of the universe. Egoism is the greatest evil, and love and compassion are the greatest good."<sup>36</sup>

The Indian philosophers, S. Chatterjee and D. Datta, characterize Shankara's moral principles in a similar manner:

"The liberated man is the ideal of society, and his life must be the behaviour pattern for the entire people. He who has attained perfection should avoid inactivity or an activity which could lead the people into error. Thus Shankara does not consider public activity as incompatible with the perfect life, on the contrary he recognises it as desirable."<sup>37</sup>

Shankara's ethical teaching, which forms an important part of his philosophy, mainly attracted Tolstoy's attention. In 1897, he came to know about Shankara's teaching for the first time from V. V. Jonston's article published in the sixth

36. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 555 (Russian edition); Vol. II, p. 614 (2nd English edition).

37. S. Chatterjee & D. Datta, *Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, p. 345.

issue of the Russian journal, *Problems of Philosophy and Psychology*.<sup>38</sup> At the same time he wrote to V.G. Chertkov: "Today in *Problems of Psychology* I read Jonston's article: 'The Indian sage Shankara' Very good. The same thought of one's own divine static eternal 'self' with the changing, suffering, mortal, bodily 'self'. And it is enough for man to be enlightened by wisdom and this eternal 'self' comes forward on its own. I would have only added that this eternal 'self' is love."<sup>39</sup>

Later on, in 1909, after reading the article "Plato and Shankaracharya" in the Indian journal *The Vedic Magazine* (1909, No. 4), Tolstoy noted again in his diary the similarity of many of Shankara's principles with his thoughts about universal love and the ways to achieve it.<sup>40</sup> However, in the following months, having studied the Indian philosopher's works, he changed his opinion. The writer found in Shankara the same dogmatic narrowness which he rejected in Buddhism and in other teachings of the ancient East. Shortly before his death in October 1910, he read one of the new books about this philosopher<sup>41</sup> and noted with disappointment in his diary: "I read Shri Shankara. The fundamental metaphysical idea about the essence of life is good, but the entire teaching is a confusion worse than mine."<sup>42</sup>

This note is very significant. It contains both a criticism of the weak aspects of the teaching of the Indian philosopher and a recognition of the weakness of his own teaching. It shows that Tolstoy was far from satisfied with his system and at times saw its imperfections.

During the last decade of Tolstoy's life Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his pupil Swami Vivekananda occupied

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38. On Tolstoy's recommendation this article was later on published by 'Pasrednik' as a separate brochure. See V. Jonston, *Sri Shankara Acharya—Indian Sage*, Moscow, 1898.

39. 88.18.

40. 57.152.

41. It has not been possible to establish which one.

42. 58.142.



his thoughts.

Philosopher and preacher Ramakrishna Parmahansa (1836-1886) interested the writer chiefly with his *Discourses*—written down by his pupils and later on expounded by one of them, Vivekananda. Tolstoy had already read these *Discourses* in 1896 and admired them. Later on he came to know more about this philosopher from the collection *In the Valley of Grief* (1907) by J. Nashivin containing the translation of Vivekananda's wonderful speech "My Master" delivered by him in 1895 at the Vedanta Society in New York.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa impressed Tolstoy because he belonged to a poor family and lived a modest life in solitude. He was a man of the people with an original mind. This is why Tolstoy highly appreciated him.<sup>43</sup>

Ramakrishna's teaching was idealistic. Mystic elements are fairly strong in it. Unlike Shankara who identified existence with consciousness, Ramakrishna affirmed that the world is not illusory, that it really existed. But in his conception the world is the manifestation of the absolute spiritual substance of Brahma and man's soul is a particle of it. The destination of man is to merge in Brahma, to dissolve in it, like a drop of rain in the ocean.<sup>44</sup>

Ramakrishna considered that one of the forms of merging in Brahma and cognizing it was to bring oneself to the *samadhi*, i.e., mystical ecstasy. Romain Rolland described this state in an illuminating way by giving the example of Ramakrishna himself who like the ancient Brahman thus 'cognized God'.

Ramakrishna's ethical ideal derived from his religious-mystical conceptions. As man's soul is divine and its destination is to return to the lap from where it originated,

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43. Later on Ramakrishna Paramahansa's personality deeply interested Romain Rolland too, who devoted an essay to him: *Life of Ramakrishna*, Collected Works, Vol. XIX, Leningrad, 1936, pp. 7-199.

44. See *History of Philosophy*, Vol. 4, Moscow, USSR Academy of Sciences publication, 1959, pp. 486-489.

man's main aim should be to purify his soul and prepare it for merging into Brahma. For this he should perfect himself morally, shed the load of passions, sins, vices and other desires and renounce all that is earthly. From this arises Ramakrishna's appeal to renounce riches, power and all that separates man from God. Only he who works, leads a life of truth and who does not commit acts of violence against others will be able to achieve it.

Tolstoy did not share Ramakrishna's mystical ideas, but in his teaching he liked his high conception of the spiritual essence of man. He also shared Ramakrishna's idea about the equality of all religions in the search for 'good' and particularly his moral principles. And therefore overlooking, as he always did in similar cases, the part Ramakrishna's teaching played in India under conditions of bourgeois-feudal domination and the colonial regime he began to spread this ethical teaching in Russia.

On 13 February 1903, Tolstoy read the journal *Theosophischer Wegweiser* sent to him from Germany and in his copy underlined a number of Ramakrishna's aphorisms. "There is much in common with my conception"—he noted in his diary.<sup>45</sup>

Later on, in February 1906, Tolstoy received from his friend and biographer, P.A. Sergeenko, the book *Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's Sayings* in English published in 1905 in Madras and read it with interest. "Wonderful sayings! Ramakrishna died 50 years ago. A remarkable sage," said Tolstoy to a circle of his intimates and read aloud to them some of those sayings by the Indian philosopher.<sup>46</sup>

From the literature about Ramakrishna, Tolstoy selected nearly a hundred sayings and parables which he intended to publish in Russia. However, this publication did not materialise and the writer after carefully working over

45. 54.155.

46. D. P. Makovitzky, Yasnaya Polyana notes, entry dated 27 February, 1906. The manuscript is preserved in Tolstoy's Archives.

them included some in his collections of ancient wisdom over which he was working at that time.

The way in which Tolstoy edited Ramakrishna's parables is interesting. As a rule he gave them a vivid background and realistic character and at the same time did away with mystico-religious connotations. For example this is the way in which he rendered Ramakrishna's well-known parable about God and the sage :

A monk had retired to a desert to save his soul. He recited prayers continually and at night he got up twice to pray. A peasant brought him food. And a doubt came over him: Is such a life good? And he went to see an old man for advice. He came to the old man and told him about his life, of how he prayed, and in what words and that twice he got up at night and that he lived on alms, and asked him whether he did well. "All this is well," said the old man, "but go and see how that peasant lives who brings you food. Perhaps you will learn something from him."

The monk went to the peasant and spent a day and a night with him. The peasant got up early in the morning and only said "My Lord", and went to work and ploughed the whole day. At night he returned and before he went to bed said for the second time: "My God".

Thus the monk observed the peasant's life. "There is nothing I can learn here," he thought, and wondered why the old man had sent him to the peasant.

The monk returned to the old man and told him that he had been to the peasant, but did not find anything instructive. "He did not think about God and only twice a day mentioned him."

Then the old man said: "Take this cup filled with oil and go round the village and come back, but see that not a single drop of oil falls to the ground."

The monk did as was told and when he returned, the old man asked him:

"Tell me, how many times did you remember God

while you were carrying the cup?"

The monk confessed that he had not remembered God even once. "I," he said, "was only thinking about not spilling the oil."

And the old man said: "This cup with oil so much occupied you that you did not remember God even once. But the peasant feeds himself, his family and you with his labours and worries and still twice a day he remembers God."<sup>47</sup>

In Tolstoy's story the action takes place on the earth and not in the heavens, the characters are ordinary people: a monk, an old man and a peasant. A typical detail is introduced: The peasant feeds the monk, who therefore doubts the rightness of his way of life. The peasant appears in a better light than the man of God. Ramakrishna gives it in a different way. In his narration the conversation takes place between the divine sage Narada and the heavenly deity Vishnu. There are no earthly objects. God Vishnu reading the soul of his follower discovers "pride" in it and sends the sage to the peasant. In Ramakrishna's story the peasant is also represented as cut off from concrete earthly conditions. A religio-mystical aura pervades the entire parable. Tolstoy removed it and gave the parable a new character: virtue rests not in ideal holiness, but in work. He rewrote the other sayings and parables of Ramakrishna in the same way.

During his last years Tolstoy did not concern himself with Ramakrishna except selecting from his works passages for inclusion in his new collections of ancient sayings which he had compiled previously. At this time he was considerably more interested in Vivekananda's teachings. But once, in August 1910, he received a letter from a person bearing the same name as the late philosopher, namely, from the Indian publicist and preacher Shri Paramahansa and these thoughts came back to him. Shri Paramahansa, who was travelling at that time in Europe, wrote from Belgium about his great desire to visit Russia in order to meet and talk with

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47. 43.137-138.



Tolstoy. He wanted Tolstoy to ask the Russian Government for an entrance visa for him as on principle he considered it improper to ask for it through the British authorities.

Tolstoy wanted to meet such an envoy from India very much as he noted in his diary<sup>48</sup> and in his letter to V. G. Chertkov.<sup>49</sup> But at that time he was passing through a period of tension and was thinking of going to stay at his daughter's at Kochety and had therefore very regretfully to give up the idea of this meeting: "I regret, I cannot," he replied to the Indian in Brussels.<sup>50</sup>

A great philosopher and poet Vivekananda (1862-1902), who had done so much for the propagation of his teacher Ramakrishna's ideas, was himself an outstanding thinker. A brilliant orator and a passionate publicist he carried on a constant and indignant struggle against the false western bourgeois civilization<sup>51</sup> and thus already his views coincided with those of Leo Tolstoy. The Russian writer was attracted to him also by the fact that he constantly relied upon the patriarchal-peasant morality, defended the interests of the simple cultivators, and this, as is known, characterized Tolstoy himself.

Vivekananda's philosophy is idealistic like that of his teacher and is marked by elements of mysticism.<sup>52</sup> Vivekananda considered that the world is the creation of a supreme force, Brahma, and that the destination of man's soul is to merge in it through self-purification.

"This world," he wrote, "is not our true dwelling place... This is only one of the stages through which we must pass. Remember the great saying of the Sankya philosophy: 'The whole of the world is natural for the soul, but not the soul for nature. Nature exists only to educate the soul; it has no other significance; it exists because the soul must acquire

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48. 58.59.

49. 89.202.

50. 82.108.

51. See: Romain Rolland, *Life of Vivekananda*.

52. The characteristics of Vivekananda's views can be seen in *History of Philosophy*, Vol. IV, pp. 493-496.

knowledge and free itself through knowledge."<sup>53</sup>

According to the philosopher the comprehension of true existence is reached by means of practising constantly moral perfection including the Yogic eight-fold system which includes physical exercises (training in breath-control, for instance), and particularly the education of oneself in moral qualities (honesty, truthfulness, curbing of passions, etc.). But at the same time he aspired to renew the decadent canons of the Vedantas and to instil them with a living soul.

"The abstract Vedanta must become living, poetic," he wrote, "it must enter in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology."<sup>54</sup> According to Vivekananda, religion must be placed at the service of the daily needs of the people, and must help them in their struggle for bread, for freedom from colonial oppression and for a better future.

Vivekananda's socio-political views were progressive for his time. He saw the future of his country in freedom and independence which can be obtained only by the people. The philosopher believed that the only hope of India was the people because he considered the upper classes to be physically and morally dead. Vivekananda wrote with anger about the stagnation and debility of India, the cause of which he saw in its isolation from the rest of the world: "The fact of our isolation... from all the other nations of the world is the cause of our degeneration and its only remedy is getting back into the current of the rest of the world. Motion is the sign of life."<sup>55</sup>

Vivekananda's views on the actual problems of his time are vividly characterized by their anti-capitalistic character. He passionately exposed bourgeois civilization and its outcome—capitalism, he violently attacked Western countries

53. Swami Vivekananda, *Karma-Yoga*, St. Petersburg, p. 32.

54. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*. The Signet Press, Calcutta, 6th Edition (April, 1956), p. 357.

55. *ibid.*, p. 358.

which kept the peoples of the East in the clutches of oppression. The philosopher opposed the entire bourgeois culture with its greed, immorality and general decay.

"Those who have money," he wrote, "keep the Government of the country under their heel, and making use of it rob the people, shedding their blood. The rich send the common people to fight in distant countries in order to benefit from their victory by filling their purses with gold earned by the blood of the poor spilt on the battlefields. But as far as the common people are concerned they have nothing else to do, but to shed their blood."<sup>56</sup>

Vivekananda believed that the day was near when the lower classes (the Sudras) would overthrow the power of the rich and would take their destiny into their own hands.

Vivekananda's attitude towards non-violence—the foundation-stone of Hinduism—was peculiar. He assumed this idea to be the highest ideal and moral dogma, but considered that it did not suffice as guidance in day-to-day life.

"All the great teachers," he wrote, "said: Do not resist evil. They taught that non-resistance was the highest moral ideal. We all know that if some of us were to carry out this ideal in practice, the entire public edifice would collapse, the wicked would take possession of our property and of our life and would deal with us according to their discretion. If, even for one day, the ideal of non-resistance is actually carried out, it would lead to a catastrophe."<sup>57</sup>

Vivekananda considered that a more reliable way to achieve freedom was the enlightenment of the people by preparing them for the forthcoming struggle. He urged the Indian intelligentsia to go to the people, 'from door to door', and there 'in the depth of poverty' do all to lighten the fate of the suffering people.

"It is immaterial whether there is a hell or a paradise, whether the soul exists or not! Here is the world: it is full of destitution. Go into this world, as the Buddha did, and

56. Quoted from *History of Philosophy*, Vol. 4, pp. 493-494.

57. Swami Vivekananda, *Karma-Yoga*, pp. 11-12.

apply your efforts to diminish this destitution, or die attempting to do it. Forget yourself—this is the first lesson which you must know first of all, whether you are a theist, an atheist, an agnostic or a follower of the Vedanta, a Christian or a Muslim...First bread, then the religion. We stuff the poor with too much religion while they want to eat...As long as there is even one dog which does not have food in my country, my religion is to feed it."<sup>58</sup>

He also told his students about this:

"Look, what simple hearts these poor illiterate men have...How can we have the courage to raise a piece of bread to our mouth when our countrymen do not have enough food and clothes? When I see their need, I think: let us discard these tales about religion, the conch shells we blow, the bells we ring, the lamps we have in front of the image of the deity...Let us go from village to village and let us devote our life to the service of the poor."<sup>59</sup>

Contradictory elements from mystic ancient yogic systems up to socialistic ideas of the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century were interwoven strangely in Vivekananda's ideology. But basic to it were the ideas of the Indian patriarchal peasantry with their weak and strong points, and Tolstoy understood it of course.

Tolstoy's acquaintance with Vivekananda's philosophy dates back to September, 1896, when for the first time he noted in his diary that he had read "a charming book on Indian wisdom" which had been sent to him.<sup>60</sup> This was a series of lectures on ancient Indian philosophy delivered by Vivekananda in New York in the winter of 1895-96. A. K. Datt, the Indian scholar, who sent to Tolstoy this book, wrote to him:

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58. Quoted from S. M. Kedrov, "The sociological and philosophical thought of India of the second half of the XIX century", *Vestnik istorii mirovoi kultury*, 1959, No. 9. pp. 110-122.

59. Quoted from Romain Rolland's *Life of Vivekananda*, p. 317.

60. 53.106.



"You will be pleased to know that your doctrines are in complete agreement with the Indian philosophy at the period of its highest achievement, the most ancient to reach us."<sup>61</sup>

Tolstoy wrote in reply to this letter that he liked the book and he noted with approval the reasoning on what was man's 'self'.<sup>62</sup>

In Vivekananda's passionate tirades directed against the contemporary bourgeois civilization, in his affirmations of the priority of the spiritual essence of man over his 'material cover', Tolstoy heard the echoes of the early teachings of the ancient Indians and particularly many motifs of the Vedas which were congenial to him.

The second book by Vivekananda which Tolstoy read was a collection of *Speeches and Articles* (in English) sent to him in 1907 by his acquaintance I. F. Nazhivin. When Nazhivin asked him whether he would like to have this book, Tolstoy replied on 7 July 1907: "Please send me the book by the Brahmin. The reading of such books is more than a pleasure, it is a broadening of the soul."<sup>63</sup>

In 1908, I. F. Nazhivin published a collection of articles, *Voices of the Peoples*, which included Vivekananda's articles "The Hymn of the Peoples" and "God and Man". The latter article made a strong impression on Tolstoy. "This is unusually good," he wrote to Nazhivin, after reading it.<sup>64</sup>

But Tolstoy's attitude was critical even towards those thinkers whom he highly appreciated and in particular also towards Vivekananda. Having approved of his article, he wrote at the same time in his notebook at the end of June, 1908:

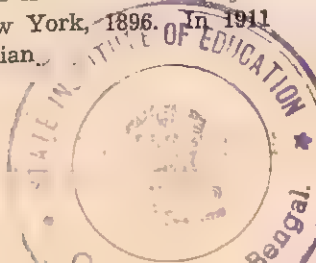
"I read the Hindu. Very witty, verbose and empty. He

61. The letter was not published. It is kept in Tolstoy's Archives. The name of the book is *The Philosophy of Yoga* by Swami Vivekananda, New York, 1896. In 1911 the book was translated into Russian.

62. 69.146.

63. 77.151.

64. 78.84.



wants to justify their beliefs in objective beings and their doubts about them. All this is empty verbosity. One thing exists and this is beyond all doubts: my life and my freedom and necessity to decide how to spend it. Only this is the basis of all religions, of all philosophies. And only this exists."<sup>65</sup>

These critical remarks refer to Vivekananda's affirmation that the soul is immortal, that man never dies, because his soul merges with the imperishable world soul—Brahma.

Talking about Vivekananda with his relatives and friends Tolstoy commended the depth of the thought and the passionate conviction of the young Indian philosopher. But at the same time the writer affirmed that Vivekananda disappointed him very much: "He writes about miracles which he himself saw and himself performed."<sup>66</sup> And as testified by Tolstoy's family doctor, D. P. Makovitzky, he talked with an ironical smile about these miracles with fruits, grapes, about which Vivekananda argued seriously. "How strangely it goes together with this depth of thought," he said.<sup>67</sup>

Giving this view to his acquaintance A. A. Kamenskaya, Tolstoy expressed himself still more sharply: "When I read this nonsense it completely spoiled my impression about Vivekananda."<sup>68</sup>

Once Tolstoy praised Vivekananda for his "excellent polemics with Schopenhauer about God" and he noted the English of the Indian philosopher: "What English has Vivekananda! He has learnt all its subtleties. It is even his weak point, he is too eloquent."<sup>69</sup> But at the same time the writer opposed some propositions of the Indian philosopher. Thus regarding the system of 'self education' of the Yogis approved by Vivekananda, Tolstoy said:

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65. 56.364.

66. D. P. Makovitsky, *Yasnaya Polyana Notes*, entry of 28 June 1908.

67. *ibid.*, entry of 29 June 1908.

68. *ibid.*

69. *ibid.*, entry of 3 July 1908.

"In Indian philosophy there is a surprising combination of the deepest wisdom with incredible nonsense. For instance the discussion about the methods necessary for realizing the exalted state; it is necessary to sit, to keep the back straight, to keep both eyes fixed on the extremity of one's nose and to repeat the word 'Om'."<sup>70</sup>

Tolstoy was also attracted by the personality of the Indian philosopher. He read with interest about Vivekananda's great activity in Europe, America and in his own country, about his passionate speeches in defence of the people and of his preaching in the monasteries in India. On 20 October 1908, after reading in his journal *Free Hindustan* about the humiliating treatment meted out to Vivekananda while he was in jail for having told his fellow prisoners about the violence committed by the authorities, Tolstoy sharply condemned the British Government in a conversation with his friend.

In March 1909, preparing a list of new popular books for the people, Tolstoy also included in the plan of publication the Sayings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda<sup>71</sup>, and, in April of the same year, he informed the Orientalist N. O. Einhorn: "We are preparing a publication of selected thoughts of Vivekananda whom I appreciate very much."<sup>72</sup> But this publication did not materialise.

There is evidence that Swami Vivekananda while travelling in Europe in 1900 intended to visit Yasnaya Polyana. But this visit did not take place. Romain Rolland in his essay on Vivekananda bitterly regretted that "he was not able to bring together the two clairvoyants, the two religious geniuses of Europe and Asia."<sup>73</sup>

After Vivekananda's death rumour spread that the Indian philosopher had been killed by some countryman of his. Tolstoy asked the English Orientalist C. V. Daniel

70. A. B. Goldenveiser, *Near Tolstoy*, Vol. 1, p. 217.

71. 57.40.

72. 79.142.

73. Romain Rolland, *Collected Works*, Vol. 14, Leningrad, 1933, p. 338.

who visited him to find out all the details and inform him. which, having heard authentic accounts of his last hours from persons who were close to the Indian philosopher, he denied the rumour of an unnatural death.

"On the day of his death," he wrote, "the Swami felt better and gave a lesson to his pupil. After the lesson he came out and walked a little. Coming back he lay down. The pupils massaged his legs and this helped him. Wanting to rest he expressed the desire to remain alone. Soon the pupil in the adjacent room who was waiting for his orders heard an alarming noise and went to him. The teacher was dead. Personally I am convinced that the Swami passed into the other world without carrying anybody's hatred, but only the love of many."<sup>74</sup>

This news calmed Tolstoy. It was important for him to know that the Indian philosopher did not fall a victim to enmity and hatred which he had condemned all his life.

In 1909 the Orientalist N. O. Einhorn brought several books of the Indian publicist Swami Abhedananda published in Germany to Yasnaya Polyana. Tolstoy got interested in his works and read them avidly.

In Yasnaya Polyana, the following pamphlets by Swami Abhedananda in German, with Tolstoy's notes, have been preserved: *The Religion of the Indians*, *Why does the Indian reject the new church, although he recognizes Christ?*, *The Word and the Cross in old India*, *Why the Indians are Vegetarians*, *Divine Community*, *The Path to Beatitude*, *The Philosophy of Good and Evil*, *Who is the Savior of the Soul?*, *Does the Soul exist after Death*. On the cover of the pamphlet, *The Path to Beatitude*, is written "Excellent" in the hand of Tolstoy.

In the same year Tolstoy read Abhedananda's pamphlet, *The Philosophy of the Vedanta, the Divine Truth of Man*, published in English in New York (1903) and wrote in his diary:

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74. The letter was not published. The original is kept in Tolstoy's Archives.



"Yesterday evening I read books about Hindu religion. One excellent book about the meaning of life—Atman. 'Love the spirit which is in yourself; not yourself, but Atman, i.e., the unlimited spirit, and you will love everything, and you will live by the spirit, freely, beatifically.' How happy I am that I begin to understand, experience, feel this not with my reason but with my entire soul."<sup>75</sup>

Tolstoy intended to give some of Abhedananda's pamphlets to the publishing house, 'Posrednik' for publication in Russian, but could not carry out his intention.

## Tolstoy and the Indian Literature

THE FOLK and epic literature of ancient India have attracted the attention of Russian writers for a long time. They did not escape the attention of Leo Tolstoy, too.

He became interested in the epic anticipations of the Indian Vedas—the most ancient monuments of literature. He became acquainted with them through the best west European translations and through *The Vedic Magazine* published in India and regularly received at Yasnaya Polyana.

Recognising the profundity of the Vedas, Tolstoy singled out first of all those chapters and sayings which dealt with the particular moral problems that troubled him. Ideas concerning love for mankind, a peaceful and industrious life expressed in the Vedas, seemed to confirm for him the idea that good is laid in man's soul. Tolstoy the artist also highly valued the poetic merits of these ancient masterpieces of Indian culture.

The Vedas reflect the history of the early Aryans, their customs and morals, and their attitude towards work, the community, the family and personal relationships. The writer noted with satisfaction their attachment to agricultural labour, their desire to live in peace with everybody and their readiness to help each other. He admired their sturdy commonsense, and felt that the somewhat naive acceptance of one's lot in life involving continuous labour by the simple agriculturists and cowherds was the correct one. He appreciated the healthy and optimistic tone of these ancient hymns.

Russian and Indian research workers' note that, des-

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1. See: A. V. Mishulin, "The Discovery of Ancient Civilisa-

pite the naivety of some of the Aryan conceptions contained in the Vedas, a great wealth of philosophical notions, of social ideas and ethical principles is implied in them. The depth of thought, the range of subject-matter, the extent of knowledge contained in the Vedas make them virtually an encyclopaedia of ancient India.

The world, according to the Vedas, was self-created without the intervention of the gods:

Who knows the mystery? Who disclosed it?

From whence came the world?

Those distances even gods cannot cover.

They came later. Who knows?<sup>2</sup>

There is nothing mystical or divine about the creation of the world. It was gradually formed as the result of a long process of development. At first there was nebulousness, then smoke and later on the sun, air, fire, lightning, crystal and the moon appeared. Hence the world is material and self-propagating.

The world is characterised by a perpetual cyclic movement; nature; men and animals change continuously; death is followed by life, decay by rejuvenescence. That is why man must not despair. Life will come after death; joy will replace grief.

Nature and its eternal renovation and renewal are described in particularly positive, life-affirming tones in the Vedas:

The bright god-given radiance is rising,

It is the eye of Mitra, Varuna and Agni.

The earth, the sky and space between them

Are filled with the heavenly life of the sun.<sup>2a</sup>

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- tions: the Hind Valley," *Vestnik Drevnii Istarii*, 1946, No. 1; G. F. Aleksandrov, *History of the Doctrines of Sociology: The Ancient East*; Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*; S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*.
2. *Calls from Antiquity: Hymns, Songs and Conceptions of the Ancient*. K. D. Balmont's translation, published by 'Panteon', 1916, p. 86.
  - 2a. *Vedic Poetry Hymns*. Translated from Sanskrit by B. A.

In the Vedas elements of naive materialism are combined with idealistic conceptions about the world. Nature is deified and gods have power over man. But this power is not cruel and tyrannical as is described in some later Indian doctrinal systems like Brahmanism. By leading a good life, man can earn the goodwill of the gods and even a reward for his efforts. The gods are powerful, but not omnipotent. The world and many things in it are not dominated by them.

The Vedas are optimistic: joy and happiness prevail over decay and death. Rabindranath Tagore characterised them as a poetical reflection of people's belief in the powerful forces of life. "The people who possess a rich and unsophisticated imagination," he wrote, "at the dawn of civilization feel the infinite mystery of life. This was a simple faith which deified all the elements and forces of nature, but at the same time it was a manly and cheerful faith in which the mystery added only a charm to life without burdening it with heavy doubts."<sup>3</sup>

It is not surprising that Tolstoy, who saw in the Vedas an ethical code close to his own ideas, noticed their life-affirming aspect. In one of the collections of the Vedas which he read at the beginning of 1884, he found an original hymn to intelligence and at once he transcribed it into his diary. Here are the words the Russian writer particularly liked:

"Everything was created by intelligence. The world is the eye of intelligence, and intelligence is its foundation. Only intelligence exists. The man who has submitted himself to this and has dedicated himself to serve it moves from this world of phenomena into a beatific and free world and becomes immortal."<sup>4</sup>

Tolstoy's interest in the Vedas was not only on account of its religious and philosophical ideas but also as a monument of Indian literature that reflected the national genius and skill of the Indian people. He included the Vedas and

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Larin, 'Vostok', Book 4, 1924, pp. 51-52.

3. Quoted from Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India*.

4. 49.63.



their later commentaries—the Upanishads—among those perfect productions of world art which are accessible to, and understood by, a man of any country and of any epoch and are therefore true art. "The Vedic hymns," he wrote in his treatise *What is Art*, "convey very profound feelings and yet can be understood by any of us whether educated or not in the same way as they were understood in their own time by people whose education was not of the same order as that of our working people."<sup>5</sup>

Tolstoy often mentioned the Vedas and the Upanishads in his diaries and letters and they were always accompanied by enthusiastic remarks. The writer's interest in them never flagged.<sup>6</sup> In May 1910, he received a letter from the English Orientalist Edward Schiller who, having come to know about Tolstoy's interest in the Vedas, recommended to him an Indian friend, 'one of the most remarkable sages' of India and a great expert in the Vedas'.

In his reply to Schiller, Tolstoy thanked him and said, "It would be a great pleasure for me to get into touch with your Indian friend. I greatly revere the sages of India and, although I am somewhat acquainted with their teaching, I would like to know still more."<sup>8</sup> But as this correspondence took place just six months before Tolstoy's death, his meeting with the Indian scholar could not take place.

Tolstoy not only studied the Vedas, but also popularised them in Russia. In his *Circle for Reading, The Thoughts Of Wise Men* and other works collected under the title Indian Wisdom he included many sayings from the Vedas and the Upanishads. Among them are Indian proverbs and maxims. Here are some of them:

"Lay up for yourself such riches that thieves will not steal them, where tyrants dare not encroach and

5. 30.109.

6. In the library of Yasnaya Polyana the book, *From the Upanishads*, by the English Orientalist Charles Johnson (Dublin, 1896) has been preserved.

7. Unfortunately Schiller did not mention his name.

8. 81.253.

which will remain yours also after death—riches that never diminish and never decay.”

“Act during the day in such a manner that at night your sleep is untroubled; act in your youth in such a manner that your old age is tranquil.”

“The moth flies into the flame of the lamp ignorant of the pain caused by the fire; the fish swallows the worm on the hook ignorant of the danger; but we do not refrain from sensual pleasures even though we know very well that they entangle us in a net of woes. Alas! such is the bottomless depth of heedlessness!”

“He who does nothing, does evil.”

“Truly mighty is he who masters himself.”

“The intelligent study in order to know; the worthless in order to be known.”

Tolstoy not only admired the wisdom expressed in such sayings, but also the epigrammatic form of these brief, pointed moral maxims.

He was well acquainted with the masterpieces of ancient Indian literature, especially the famous epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana. Before him, the epic Mahabharata had been recognised and appreciated by Russian men of letters. In 1844, the Russian poet V. A. Zhukovsky had translated one episode from it, namely, ‘Nala and Damayanti’ and published it as a separate book. V. G. Belinsky devoted a review to this translation in which he noted the richness of content of the epic and the ‘grandeur of its poetry’.<sup>9</sup>

Tolstoy gave much importance to the social and ethical ideas found in the Indian epics. In the Mahabharata and the Ramayana the personality of man is of overriding importance. Everything is for man, this is the principle predominating in them. Man is great, thanks to his capacity to apprehend the world and himself. His happiness does

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9. V. G. Belinsky, *Complete Works*, Vol. 8, p. 113. Moscow, 1955.

not rest in a selfish life for himself, but in working for the good of others. The main thing in a man's life is that activity which is altruistic.

The Soviet scholar G. F. Aleksandrov expanded as follows the moral theme of the Indian epics:

"In the interests of his duties towards his country and his relatives man is obliged to live, act and achieve perfection without heeding the consequences which this activity will bring for his own self. Any kind of pride, personal interest, or feelings of fear, anger, anxiety, hatred must be put aside. Always be yourself, retain self-control; rejoice in proportion to the happy issue of events while not allowing yourself to be overcome by grief and sadness at an unfavourable outcome. Do not stop at half-decisions, they never lead to success and will not make a true man of you. However different men may be, cruel or good, selfish or altruistic, it is only sincere devotion and love which will win their confidence. Not only the Mahabharata but many myths, legends and stories of ancient India contain appeals to honesty, truthfulness, fulfilment of one's duty towards one's country, courage and fortitude."<sup>10</sup>

Tolstoy joyfully welcomed these human postulates of the ancient Indian epics. He read the Mahabharata and the Ramayana in the best Russian and the West European translations. In the library at Yasnaya Polyana, a two-volume French edition of the Ramayana<sup>11</sup> has been preserved to the present day. The study of these works gave Tolstoy a great aesthetic delight. He admired the grandeur of the content and the encyclopaedic nature of the historical information to be found in these historico-heroic epics. He was particularly attracted by the moral aspect of the poems: admiring the praise of industry, peaceful relationships,

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10. G. F. Aleksandrov, *History of Sociological Doctrines: The Ancient East*, p. 408.

11. *Panteon Litteraire*, Litterature orientale, Romans, contes orientaux, etc. See footnote 20.

modesty, disparagement of wealth and so on.<sup>12</sup>

In the Mahabharata Tolstoy particularly knew and loved the sixth book, the Bhagavad Gita<sup>13</sup>, which is often mentioned in his diaries and letters. It was the frequent subject of conversation with his intimates in Russia and of correspondence with friends in India. Thus, in February 1908, he wrote to the Indian scholar S. P. Chital(?)<sup>14</sup> who had reproached Tolstoy for not appearing to accept the fundamental teaching of the Mahabharata, i.e., the sermon on the submission of man to his duty to society: "I was sorry to notice that you think that I do not agree with the basic proposition of the Bhagavad Gita that man must direct all his spiritual forces to the fulfilment of his duty. . . I believe firmly in it and I always try to remember this and act in accordance with this, and also to explain it to those who ask about my beliefs, as well as expressing it in my writings."<sup>15</sup>

In Tolstoy's letters and diaries and particularly in his later collections for reading we find many sayings from Mahabharata, Ramayana and *Hitopadesha*. Here are a few:

"If there were neither a heaven nor a God ruling the world, virtue would still be a compulsory law of life. To know what is just, and to accomplish it, is the privilege of man" (Ramayana).

"Only he is intelligent who acts well" (*Hitopadesha*).

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12. The outstanding philosopher of modern India S. Radhakrishnan underlines the ethical and aesthetic aspect of the Mahabharata: "It is considered to be an authoritative work on questions of conduct and society. It is intended to teach rules of moral conduct even to those who occupy low positions in society and are weak." (*Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 410 of the Russian translation).
  13. The Bhagavad Gita was published in Russia for the first time in 1788. See *Bhagavad Gita, or the Talks of Krishna and Arjuna*, translated from English by A.A. Petrov, Moscow 1788.
  14. S.P. Chital's letter to Tolstoy has not been preserved.
  15. 78.32-33.



"It is better to lose one's life than to flatter the wrong-doer. Poverty is better than luxury obtained by serving the rich. Not to wait at the door of the rich and not to speak with the voice of the suppliant—this is the best life" (*Hitopadesha*).

It is easy to perceive that these sayings chiefly relate to work, moral education and the dignity of man. Other sayings express the idea of mutual assistance amongst men, abstention from wars and violence, and brotherhood among nations.

In Tolstoy's collections we also come across ordinary popular legends, sayings and proverbs which are probably still known today by the Indian peasant. Many of them had already been included by Tolstoy in his *Russian Books for Reading* published in the seventies after rewriting them as short stories intended for the young reader.

Later on extracts from other classics and epics are represented in Tolstoy's collections along with fables and legends from the *Panchatantra* and the *Hitopadesha*—those wonderful anthologies of folk-stories and fables—, from epic dialogues, the Puranas, from the classic Tamil literature *Kural*, from the *Books of Golden Rules* and some other well-known Indian writings.

Tolstoy not only selected and translated these works, but he also carefully adapted them, not sparing either time or labour. He attempted, however, to preserve the local colour, and the spirit and flavour of the epoch so that Russian readers would come to know and love the ancient wisdom of India and its manly and heroic epic.

The later literature of the peoples of India remained almost unknown to Tolstoy. Very little of the recent literature including the work of contemporaries reached Tolstoy. These were mainly stylised Russian and West European translations of Indian lyrics, whose decadent exoticism left him indifferent. However strange it may seem, not one of the leading Indian contemporary writers tried to get into touch with him or send him their works. In the library at Yasnaya Polyana one can find imitations of Indian poetry.

Such is the poem *To Buddha* by P.A. Kalenov (1902), the mystico-theosophical collections of E. P. Blavatskaya.<sup>16</sup> There is even a treatise on the theory of Indian poetry<sup>17</sup>, but the works of Sarat Chandra Chatterji and of Tagore are absent.

This can only be explained by the distance between the two countries and the differences in the literatures of Russia and India, and absence of ties between them, because if the Indian writers had contacted Tolstoy they would have received from him as warm a response as that received from him by Indian philosophers, journalists, publishers and students with whom he carried on friendly correspondence for a long period.

Tolstoy did much work on Indian folklore—he translated and adapted Indian fables, fairy tales and legends for the young Russian reader.<sup>18</sup> He studied Indian folklore chiefly in the seventies when he was working on his *Azbuka* (The ABC Book) and the *Russian Books for Reading*. In these books, in which are to be found excellent Russian fairy tales and adaptations of the fables of Aesop and La Fontaine and folklore from other countries, the writer included twenty-three Indian fables and fairy tales. Many Indian proverbs and sayings are included in his later collections for reading.

Tolstoy's purpose in publishing the *Azbuka* and earlier anthologies for children was to improve the condition of national education in Russia, a cause dear to his heart, and to raise the general and aesthetic level of children's books.

In 1861, he wrote: "I have one aim: the education of

16. E. P. Blavatskaya, *The Voice of Silence ; The Seven Gates : Two paths from the Treasury of Indian Scriptures*, tr. from English by E. Kaluga, 1908.

17. F. Shcherbatskaya, "Theory of Poetry in India". Reprint from the journal of the Ministry of Education, 1902 N. 6.

18. See the article by E. E. Zaidenshnur: "The Eastern Folklore in L. N. Tolstoy's Works", "Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie", 1958, No. 6; "Folklore of the Peoples of the East in the Works of L. N. Tolstoy", Collection *Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy*, Tula, 1960.

the people. I have a single belief (which I somehow feel has attached me to the cause of education) and that is: we know nothing. I have one hope for knowledge: it is for all to learn together and to merge all classes of society in a shared knowledge."

It was precisely this aim which guided Tolstoy when he included in his collections for children the oral creations of the Russians and other peoples of the world.

Works of Indian folklore which are contained in the *Russian Books for Reading* are largely taken from the collection of fables of Bidpai (Vidyapati or Pilpay) which are part of the *Panchatantra*, and many of them have been re-titled by Tolstoy.<sup>19</sup> He took these from the capital work *Panteon litteraire*, a three-volume collec-

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19. In the first *Russian Book for Reading* the following fables were included (in the brackets their Indian names are given): 'The Head and the Tail of the Snake', 'Thin Threads', 'The Monkey' ('The Monkey and the Carpenter'), 'The Division of the Inheritance' ('The Rich Father and his Two Sons'), 'The Monkey and the Peas' ('The Monkey and a Handful of Peas') (This fable was used earlier in *War and Peace* where Tolstoy compared Napoleon's army which did not want to leave the booty amassed in Russia, with the monkey who having pushed her hand into the narrow neck of a jug and grasped a handful of nuts, does not open her fist in order to keep what she has taken, and thus perishes). 'The Milky Cow' ('The Brahmin and his Milch Cow'), 'The Girl Mouse' ('The Mouse who was turned into a Girl') and 'Two Merchants'.

In the second *Russian Book for Reading* were included the fables: 'Success' ('The Merchant and His Stick'), 'The Duck and the Crescent Moon', 'The Mouse under the Barn' ('The Wasteful Mouse'), 'Three Cakes and one Dough Ring' ('A Man and Half a Cake'), 'The Best Bears' ('The Master of the House and the Buyer of Mangoes'), 'The Falcon and the Cock', 'The Jackal and the Elephant', 'The Heron, the Fish and the Crow Fish' ('The Heron, the Crow Fish and the Fishes'), 'The Water Spirit and a Pearl' ('The Man and a Pearl'), 'The Indian and the Englishman' ('The Compassionate Indian'), and 'Two

(Contd.)

tion, *The Avadanas* and also from some Russian publications.<sup>20</sup>

Almost all the Indian fables and fairy tales included in Tolstoy's collections were carefully adapted by him for the young Russian reader<sup>21</sup>, as can be seen from the many autographs which have been preserved. He endeavoured to achieve artistic perfection while imparting a Russian character to these works. This is why in place of Indian gods, rajahs, brahmins and merchants, traditional Russian folk heroes, forest and water spirits, stupid stars, swindlers and shrewd peasants figure in them, though in the majority of fables the Indian colour has been retained. The moral has been everywhere preserved.

Thus Tolstoy's painstaking labours in popularising Indian epics and folklore has mutually enriched the literatures of both the countries.

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Brothers' ('Two Travellers'). The fable 'The Man and a Pearl' was used by Tolstoy in his treatise "What shall we do then?"

In the *Third Russian Book for Reading* the following fairy tales were included: 'The King and the Falcon' ('The Sultan and the Falcon'), 'The Blind Milk', and 'The Wolf and the Onion.'

In the *Fourth Book* appeared the fairy tales: 'The King and the Elephant' ('The Blind and the King's Elephant'), 'Why Woe is in the World' ('The Monk, the Pigeon, the Crow, the Poisonous Snake and the Deer').

20. *Panteon litteraire. Litterature orientale, Romans, conte orientaux 'mille et un jour'. Contes persans, traduits en francais par Petis de Lacroix, suivis de plusieurs autres recueils de contes, traduits des 'langues orientales.* Paris, 1839; *Les Avadanas. Contes et apologues indiens inconnus jusqu'a ce jour, suivis de fables, de poesies et de nouvelles chinoises, traduits par M. St. Julien, t. I-III.* Paris, 1859.

21. See commentaries by B. S. Spiridonova to the *New ABC* and to the *Russian Books for Reading*. 21.607-686.



## Indians write to Yasnaya Polyana

### I

AMONG the Indians who corresponded with Tolstoy there were people of different outlooks and different convictions belonging to different social groups. Some were attracted by his artistic creations and by the problems raised in them. Others were interested in his writings as publicist which had been widely propagated in India. But the majority of Indians wrote to Tolstoy about the calamities of their country in the hope that the Russian writer whose voice was listened to throughout the world would step forward in defence of the Indian people. And Tolstoy devoted particular attention to these letters trying not to leave a single one of them unanswered.

One of the first to write to Tolstoy about the disastrous situation of the people in India was the well-known public man and journalist A. Ramaseshan who published from Madras the popular socio-political journal, *The Aryan*.

The cause of his appeal to the Russian writer was the bloody events of 1900 in the Far East, and, in particular, the Imperialist powers' reprisal against disarmed China.

"I beg you to excuse me, Count," wrote Ramaseshan, "for this long letter written to you by a man whom you do not know. My only excuse is my admiration of you and of your works which are even known in my country which is so far away from your sphere of activity and not connected with the aims of your continuous struggle. Perhaps you will be surprised when you come to know that your name is known to the majority of my educated countrymen. They are acquainted with your artistic works and they follow your life and your spiritual growth with great interest."

Further the author of the letter wrote of the Indian readers' reaction to Tolstoy's works on moral-ethical themes, and in particular to his article, "About Life", which made thousands of simple people think about the causes of their calamities. He expressed the indignation of the Indians against the so-called Christian states' reprisals against the peaceful Chinese people. "News about the actions of Christian kings, Christian soldiers and missionaries in once-upon-a-time happy China," wrote Ramaseshan, "painfully impressed the Asian peoples. Lately we have often been asking ourselves the questions: how can peoples following the high religion of Christ perpetrate such barbaric deeds, how can they entertain political ideals and a social regime so diametrically opposed to the spirit of Christ's teaching? Machiavelli's spirit is still hovering over modern Europe."

Speaking about his country he noted a certain progress as compared to the period of intestine wars among Indian princes, but complained against the growing oppression of the Indian people by the British rulers. "Our country," he wrote, "is becoming poorer and poorer due to the maintenance of a costly government, exploitation of the country by foreign capitalists and the extraction of its mineral wealth. As a result we have constant famines which yearly extend over the larger part of the country. The government thinks differently: it claims that we live in prosperity, that famine is an accidental phenomenon in our country the prosperity of which depends on the harvest. We demand a larger participation in the government of our country, but we are told: 'Wait.'"

Further, Ramaseshan stated that in reply to all the demands put forward by the Indian people, the English replied with threats of armed reprisals. The least sign of discontent in the country is interpreted as an uprising and they are ready to inflict on the Indians a heavy punishment, although they know that they are unarmed and that "a dozen revolvers is sufficient to bring the Indian people

to obedience”.

At the end of the letter, Ramaseshan expounded his views on the policy of Great Britain in India. Recognising the utility of some reforms introduced by the English, he nevertheless considered that the English policy of colonizing India and its development as a capitalist country would not be successful. “Like every country in the world we have,” he wrote, “our own ideals. We do not believe in the anglicisation of our country: our national spirit is too powerful not to try to resist any attempt to impose such foreign ideals. We believe that a time will come when force will cease to be the only condition giving the right to political freedom and as a result of a long peaceful process, we shall succeed in living in peace and harmony with the European nations.”

Ramaseshan terminated his letter with a request to Tolstoy to send a “few encouraging words” to the Indian people which would help them in their difficult struggle for freedom and national rights.<sup>1</sup>

Ramaseshan’s message interested Tolstoy. On 25 July 1901, he replied with a long letter. This was the first direct communication of Tolstoy on the national struggle of the Indian people.

In accordance with his general outlook about the East Tolstoy first of all underlined the evil of the capitalist path of development along which India was pushed by her all powerful masters—the British. “I totally agree,” he wrote, “that your nation cannot accept that solution of the social problem, which is offered to it by Europe and which, in essence, is not a solution. A society or a gathering of people based on violence is not only in a primitive state but also in a very dangerous situation. The ties which unite such society can always be torn apart and the society may undergo the greatest calamities. All the European states are in such a situation.”<sup>2</sup>

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1. Published here for the first time. The English original of the letter is kept in Tolstoy’s archives.

2. 73.103.

Further Tolstoy explained his views on the historical development of India. According to him, the only solution to the social problem in India is the elimination of violence and the organization of the society on "reasonable principles freely accepted by all". But in the writer's view such society can be created only on the basis "of true religion", and this religion consists in "the consciousness of the divine essence of man" and in the respect for human life which is the manifestation of this essence.

The salvation of the Indian people from colonial oppression is viewed by Tolstoy in a decisive resistance to the colonisers which should be expressed in the refusal to serve in their armies and in the colonial bodies of the administration. "All the evils which you experience: famine and, what is still more important, the corruption of your people by the industrial life," wrote Tolstoy, "will continue as long as your people agree to serve as sepoys. . . you must not help the English in their rule by violence and you must not participate in any way in the government based on violence."<sup>3</sup>

Tolstoy conceived a decisive resistance against the colonisers in passive forms of disobedience of the authorities, in "not doing", "non-participation" in the state administration, but not in the form of a revolutionary struggle.

Referring to the organization of Indian society, the writer sharply condemned the division into castes existing in India seeing in it the basis of the disunity among people and the oppression of some by others.

Later on Tolstoy frequently raised the question of the caste system in his letters to other public men in the sphere of Indian culture and he always expressed his deep disapproval in this connection. He considered that neither historical nor social motives can justify the division of the Indian people into castes because this is contrary to the humanitarian foundations of human society.

Ramaseshan immediately replied to Tolstoy. In the



course of his reply, he said: "It is surprising that a man so distant from us and foreign to our traditions and our history would have understood so exactly our urgent needs and could have pointed out the ways for the final solution of our problems."<sup>4</sup>

Tolstoy's letter to Ramaseshan was published in the August issue of the journal *The Aryan*<sup>5</sup> and elicited an enthusiastic response in the Indian press. Although Ramaseshan, who belonged to the moderate wing of Indian intellectuals, left out some of the most critical statements which, as he explained in his following letter, could have provoked "undesirable comments" from the Anglo-Indian authorities. The letter made a very great impression. The daily paper *The Hindu* published an article in which it took Tolstoy's side in his criticism of the colonial order and urged the Indian people to follow the great Russian writer's advice. Similar comments appeared in the other progressive newspapers and journals which defended the national interests of India as testified by the cuttings sent to Tolstoy. Only the *Madras Mail*, the official organ of the colonial authorities, came forward with a polemic, citing against Tolstoy the usual arguments of the colonial government.

Thus Tolstoy's first letter found a ready response in Indian society. Many Indian publicists who wrote on this subject noted the Russian writer's deep understanding of the actual problems of Indian life.

On 12 September 1901, Ramaseshan sent his third letter to Yasnaya Polyana in which he warmly thanked the writer for his deep interest in the problems facing India. "We wait with great interest," he wrote, "the publication of your work about which reports have appeared in European news-

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4. Published in German in the collection: *Tolstoy under Orient*, p. 26. The original is kept in Tolstoy's archives.
  5. The letter was published under the heading: "The duty of Indians—the inheritors of an ancient civilisation". The issue of this journal is preserved in the Yasnaya Polyana library.

papers.<sup>6</sup> Expressing the feelings of the majority of the Indian people I request you to send us from time to time a few lines and to recommend to us those of your works which will help us to see more clearly the means to accomplishing our end.”<sup>7</sup>

This was the end of Tolstoy's correspondence with the first Indian with whom he exchanged letters.

## II

The second Indian to correspond with Tolstoy was Mufti Muhammed Sadiq, a thinker and publicist well known in the East and a leader of Indian Muslims. An important member of the Muslim religious organisation and publisher of the Lahore journal, *Review of Religions*, Muhammed Sadiq occupied a reactionary position in the social movement of India. His political programme consisted in distracting the attention of the masses from the acute problems of the national-liberation struggle by preaching reforms within Islam.

The journal, *Review of Religions*, not only entered into polemics with the defenders of other religions, but also preached the idea of ‘the divine’ origin of the state and of the sin of resisting the authorities. This idea was embodied in their articles by Muslim public men, including the teacher and spiritual master of Muhammed Sadiq, Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, a ‘sage’ well known in the East and who called himself a new ‘Messiah’.

In his first letter of 28 April 1903, from Gurdaspur (India), he attempted to direct Tolstoy's attention towards the personality and the teaching of this ‘prophet’ and even sent his photograph. Sadiq claimed that Ghulam Ahmed had discovered indisputable proofs of Christ's earthly exist-

6. This probably refers to the novel *Resurrection* which was being translated into many European languages at that time.
7. Published in German in the Collection *Tolstoy under Orient*, pp. 27-29. The original is preserved in Tolstoy's archives.

ence, had established the circumstances of his death and had even located Christ's grave in Kashmir, thus refuting the legend of his resurrection. Along with Ahmed's portrait Sadiq sent also the photo of this grave. After his letter Muhammed Sadiq also sent to Yasnaya Polyana a special number of his journal containing selected articles published in 1902.<sup>8</sup>

Tolstoy read carefully the collection sent to him, but the personality and preaching of the new 'Messiah' merely roused his amusement and he informed his correspondent in plain terms accordingly. In the prophecies of Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, Tolstoy detected the plainly earthly motive and he openly expressed his negative attitude towards the 'prophet' and his teaching.

"The proof of Christ's death," he wrote on 4 July 1903, "and the alleged discovery of his grave are completely useless because no reasonable man can believe in the resurrection. And as far as the man Mirza Ghulam Ahmed is concerned whom you call the promised messiah and all you write about him and what is written about him in the leaflet, none of this has the least interest for me."<sup>9</sup>

The frankness of Tolstoy made Muhammed Sadiq to send to Yasnaya Polyana a longer letter in which he attempted to explain the motives of the activity of the Muslim clergy in India.

"Poor India," he wrote on 22 July 1903, "is besieged every year by hundreds of missionaries who arrive with thousands of books and millions of booklets with the purpose of convincing the Indians that salvation can be obtained only by believing in the resurrection of the son of God. Thousands of people under their influence came to believe in this perverted Christianity and millions of rupees are

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8. Special number of the *Review of Religions* containing a few selections from the volume of 1902, Lahore, 1903. This issue with Tolstoy's notes as well as the numbers of 1903-10 of the same journal have been preserved in the Yasnaya Polyana Library.

9. 74.132-33.

spent every year in our country to pay for their expenses."<sup>10</sup>

Muhammed Sadiq continued in his letter to praise the wise life of Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, but again his enthusiasm had no effect on Tolstoy.

In December 1903, Muhammed Sadiq sent to Yasnaya Polyana a third letter full of eagerness to convince the Russian writer of the fruitfulness of the activity of Muslim priests in India. "Our country," he again complained, "is totally besieged by missionaries who in a continuous and uninterrupted stream are being sent here in order to confuse the poor Indians." Muhammed Sadiq justified the activity of his brother-preachers by the need to unmask these missionaries. He also informed Tolstoy that he had included him in the permanent complimentary mailing list of his journal and that he would send it regularly to Yasnaya Polyana. Tolstoy replied with a brief note to this letter thanking him for sending the journal. This was the end of his correspondence with Sadiq.

Tolstoy's negative attitude to the activity of Mohammedan priests in India was explained by the fact that in his opinion such activity led not to unity but to disunity of the Indian people, to the opposition of one section of the population towards the other and to the stirring up of national differences. That is why he refused to support those who followed Mirza Ghulam Ahmed and his Indian protege Muhammed Sadiq.

In the following years Tolstoy did not show any interest in the Muslim movement in India, although he regularly read the *Review of Religions* which was sent to him." He expressed his opinion about this movement in his letter of 22 October 1903 to the writer Isabella Grinevskaya: "An intensive spiritual movement has been taking place in

10. The letter is published here for the first time. The English original is kept in Tolstoy's archives.

11. An almost entire collection of this journal for nine years, from 1902 to 1910, has been preserved in the Yasnaya Polyana Library. There are notes by Tolstoy in many issues.

Islam in the recent years. I am aware such a movement has for its centre the French possession in Africa and it has its own name (I have forgotten it) and its prophet. Another is in India, in Lahore, and also has its own prophet and it is publishing its journal *Review of Religions*. Both these religious teachings do not show any thing new."<sup>12</sup> Later he characterized Muhammed Sadiq's *Review* in the following manner:

"The journal contains the most varied short articles the reading of which leaves chaos and confusion in one's head."<sup>13</sup>

### III

In 1905 the well-known philosopher and public man of India, Baba Premananda Bharati<sup>14</sup>, attracted Tolstoy's attention. He was a disciple of Vivekananda, emigrated from India to the U.S.A. in 1902 and published in Los Angeles the journal *The Light of India*.

Bharati sent to the writer a letter and his pamphlet *The White Danger* which made much noise in Europe and in America. Tolstoy's daughter Tatyana Lvovna Sukhotina sent Bharati a short letter at her father's instructions.

Tolstoy read *The White Danger* with mixed feelings. On the one hand the chauvinist and even racial prejudices of the author were reflected in this pamphlet and this made an unpleasant impression on Tolstoy. To counter-balance European and American bourgeois journalists who loved to write about the 'Yellow Peril' allegedly originating from Asia and menacing European civilisation, the author of the pamphlet spoke about the 'White Danger' which menaced Asia. The Russo-Japanese war was, according to him, the expression of the clash of two races—the white and the yellow—in which the latter obtained victory.

12. 74.208.

13. D. P. Makovitzki, *Notes of Yasnaya Polyana*, note of 19 August 1905.

14. The true name of Bharati was Surendranath Mukherji. He was in the U.S.A. till 1907. After returning to India he wrote several books. He died in Calcutta in 1914.



But at the same time Bharati's book contained violent criticism of European Imperialists and particularly of the British who were the masters of India.

"The extent to which," he wrote, "this white danger is terrible one can see from the state to which the century-old domination by the English has brought India, that India which had been the cradle of religion, knowledge, the country of goodness and piety, which never committed aggression against anybody, that India which so recently was a powerful, rich, incomparable country and which now, thanks precisely to the white danger, is breaking down under the unbearable burden of poverty and calamities. . . The superficial aspect of this rule appears excellent to a tourist loafing about on the surface of the earth, but if he has the opportunity to look behind the scenes he will understand that all this magnificence is only a 'grave full of abomination and of decay'."<sup>15</sup>

The author of the pamphlet spoke with indignation of the economic and spiritual enslavement of India, of the corrupting influence on it of the European bourgeois civilization and of the fact that the rule of the British affected not only the material well-being of the Indian people, but also their spirit:

"A people who once had the noblest ideals daily becomes more and more demoralized under the influence of a rough morality and a base 'civilization' and nevertheless the English mainly boast that their rule in India showered on the people priceless boons of 'enlightenment' and of 'civilization'—boons which nobody there dares to doubt or curse, before the menace of loaded guns."<sup>16</sup>

Tolstoy was struck not only by the facts reported by Bharati about the corrupting influence of the British rule in India but also by the ardent conviction of the publicist and by the passion of his tone.

15. Quoted from the translation of one of the chapters of the pamphlet included in the collection by I. Nazhivin, "In the Valley of Grief", p. 146.

16. Quoted from the source, p. 147.

Bharati's second letter, dated 7 January 1907, was received in Yasnaya Polyana towards the end of January along with his other book, *Shri Krishna—the Lord of Love*.<sup>17</sup> Bharati wrote :

"Once one of my audience brought me an issue of the newspaper, *New York World*, in which an interview with you had been published. I was impressed by your views on America. They not only coincided with my own, but were exactly what I had been telling my friends and my pupils before I became acquainted with your views. The fact that my point of view was confirmed by such a great thinker as you are was a great encouragement for me. This increased my pupils' and my friends' respect for me.

"Living in India I heard about you as man and thinker but I never had had an occasion to read your books. Two years ago in New York I read your novel *Resurrection*. And despite the bad translation it gave me an immense delight. Your true spirit of genius, unique in the west, manifests itself in each line despite the bad work of the translation. This is the only book of yours which I read before you sent me your books to my great joy, through your friend in London.<sup>18</sup> They are remarkable by the simplicity of the true sage, by the greatness of the enlightened soul of a philosopher."

In conclusion Bharati wrote:

"My book *The White Danger* has been highly appreciated here by some people. But this appreciation is nothing in comparison with your approval. I appreciate your opinion which I value more than the opinion of any man in the West. That my journal has deserved your approval is my greatest triumph, because you are the unique and the greatest thinker of this blind West and of the people duped by the Church."<sup>19</sup>

17. Baba Premanand Bharati, *Shri Krishna — The Lord of Love*, New York, 1904.

18. V. G. Chertkov.

19. Published here for the first time. The English original is kept in L. N. Tolstoy's archives.

Leo Tolstoy got interested in Bharati's letter and his journal. He was even more interested in his book on the philosophy of Krishna which was sent to him with the letter. He read it for several days continuously without tearing himself away from it. In the writer's diaries of 1907 there are many favourable remarks about this book.<sup>20</sup> In May 1907, he translated the sayings of Krishna for his *Book for Reading*; in 1908, he used some of them as epigraphs for the chapters of his article 'Letter to an Indian'. In 1909, at Tolstoy's urgent request a series of legends about Krishna and his sayings were translated into Russian for publication in a separate book, for which he wrote the foreword<sup>21</sup>, but this publication did not materialise.

On 16 February 1907, Tolstoy sent Bharati a long letter in which he warmly approved his activity and stated his views on Indian religion and philosophy:

"I have known Krishna's teaching before," he wrote, "but I never had such a clear idea about it as I received in reading the two parts of your book.

"Having come to know you through your book leaving aside all social conventions I shall be completely frank with you without fearing to hurt you by what I have to say."<sup>22</sup>

Agreeing with the basic idea of Krishna's teaching which is that the path to the salvation of mankind is mutual respect and good relations between people, Tolstoy, however pointed out that in Krishna's teaching as in all the ancient religions, "there are statements which not only cannot be proved, but which are obvious products of an unbridled imagination and which are at the same time completely unnecessary for understanding the basic truth and for the affirmation of the rules of conduct deriving from the main principle."<sup>22a</sup> Such are, according to Tolstoy, all the cosmological myths and historical legends about the crea-

20. 56.181. The book with Tolstoy's notes has been preserved in the Yasnaya Polyana Library.

21. 40.423-424.

22. 77.37.

22a. *ibid.*

tion of the world and the duration of its existence and all the stories about miracles. Particularly "the organisation of castes are immoral and contradictory to the fundamental truth".<sup>22b</sup>

In conclusion, Tolstoy advised Bharati to repudiate not only his delusions, but also his national biases, i.e., those false views which are connected with purely Indian religious prejudices. He urged his correspondent to work with all his power to promote a rapprochement among the peoples and among men, which can lead mankind to peace and the good.

"During many years," he wrote, "I tried to work in this direction, and if the remainder of my life can be useful for any thing, it is only for this work. Shall we work together?"<sup>23</sup>

On receiving Tolstoy's letter, Bharati published it immediately in the journal, *The Light of India*, and it was reprinted in many American and Indian journals. Later on some of the works of the Russian writer appeared in Bharati's journal.

In his following long letter to Tolstoy, of 21 March 1907, Bharati told him in greater detail about his work as publisher and populariser of ancient Indian philosophy in the U.S.A. He wrote that he had come across many obstacles in this work, but that Tolstoy's articles appearing from time to time in the American press rendered him invaluable help.

Bharati wrote with enthusiasm about the Russian writer's works which he had just read and particularly about his *Confession*: "Your every sentence impresses by its sincerity, by its force of conviction and the reflection of your spiritual conscience. At places the force and clarity of expression are simply surprising. I read this book with enthralled interest."<sup>24</sup>

22b. *ibid.*

23. 77.38.

24. Published here for the first time. The English originals are kept in Tolstoy's Archives.

From an extremely idealistic standpoint Bharati spoke in his letter against Tolstoy's criticism of cosmological and historical foundations of Krishna's teaching. At the same time he welcomed with joy the writer's appeal for joint work.

In conclusion, Bharati suggested to Tolstoy to take part in the publication of his journal in any form he desired. If necessary Bharati was even ready to give up the old name of the journal and replace it with the name of "West and East", which would have meant its conversion into an international organ of propaganda of friendship between all the continents. Tolstoy, however, did not accept this proposal.

In the summer of 1907, Bharati was returning from America to India. Before his departure from Los Angeles he sent to Yasnaya Polyana another, his last, letter in which he confided to Tolstoy his plans for the future. "I intend," he wrote on 4 July, "to leave this country and return to India, possibly already at the end of this month or at the beginning of August... I have received your article written in the form of a letter to a Chinese and I have read it with great joy, all the more so because the ideas expressed by you completely coincide with my own. I am setting off to India in order to preach ideas of peace and brotherhood to my countrymen... I shall carry on this preaching making use of the experience I acquired in the West.

"My journal will be published in an enlarged form. I shall be sending it to you."<sup>25</sup>

After returning to his country, Bharati continued the publication of the journal *The Light of India*. Till his death Tolstoy received and read this journal which acquainted him with events of the public life of India and also with some of its literature and folklore. Many numbers of the journal with Tolstoy's notes have been preserved in the Yasnaya Polyana library.<sup>26</sup>

25. Same as f.n. 24.

is kept in Tolstoy's Archives.

preserved. According to Tolstoy's secretary, N. N. Gusev, Tolstoy spoke with praise of the journal. See: N. N. Gusev, *Two Years with L. N. Tolstoy*, Moscow, 1912, p. 93.



## IV

The well-known advocate of Madras and journalist, D. Gopal Chetty, corresponded with Tolstoy for a long time and did much to popularise his work in the East. Gopal Chetty was the editor of the journal *The New Reformer*. In the middle of May 1907, he sent to Yasnaya Polyana two issues of his journal and a letter in which he explained the aims of its publication and about his own public activity.

"The purpose of the journal," he wrote, "is to work towards the uprooting of false and egoistic views separating men one from the other and to the affirmation of reason, justice and goodwill as the main moving forces of all human actions. These are the very principles which you are defending so nobly for the well-being of the erring humanity. Respectfully and humbly I beg you to reply to me and to support me in my modest beginning."<sup>27</sup>

Tolstoy looked through the numbers of the journal sent to him and found in them some interesting articles devoted to problems of Indian life.<sup>28</sup> On 30 May, he sent a reply to his correspondent in which he praised the journal and the activity of its publisher.

"The aim of your publication as you stated it in your letter," he wrote, "is the highest which can be pursued by human activity. . . I am very interested in the philosophy and the religious teachings of your great teachers. The more space you give in your journal to the ideas of these people, the more interesting it will be for Western readers."<sup>29</sup>

In conclusion, Tolstoy thanked him for the journal sent to him and wished its publisher success.

Gopal Chetty published Tolstoy's reply in his journal and in the same number inserted an article in which he acquainted the readers with the Russian writer's biography

27. Published here for the first time. The English original is kept in Tolstoy's Archives.

28. Several numbers of this journal have been preserved in the Yasnaya Polyana Library. In No. 1 for 1909 there are notes by Tolstoy.

29. 77.114.

and works. He wrote a letter to Tolstoy full of gratitude:

"You do us a great honour," he wrote on 17 July 1907, "with your interest in Indian philosophy, and for this I thank you once more. Your works have always attracted me very much, and I have been considering you as my teacher for a long time. This is why your favourable comment on my work greatly encourages me. I humbly request you to give me your help in that great work which I have undertaken."<sup>30</sup>

Issues of *The New Reformer* continued to be received in Yasnaya Polyana and Tolstoy liked to look through them.

However the publishing business of Gopal Chetty was not successful and he found himself compelled to apply for help to his readers. In November 1907, his letter, printed in the press, was also received by Leo Tolstoy.

Gopal Chetty wrote in his letter that he, a poor advocate in southern India, had founded at Madras the journal *The New Reformer* being inspired by the desire to devote his life to the struggle for establishing the supremacy of reason and justice on the earth.

"During the short time of its existence," he wrote "the journal received the recognition and approval of many outstanding men in various parts of the world. Count Leo Tolstoy, the greatest Russian writer, defined the aim of its work as the highest activity human beings can aim at."<sup>31</sup>

Gopal Chetty informed his readers that he was on the verge of ruin. He needed a considerable sum of money in order to continue the publication of his bankrupt journal. But this kind of help Tolstoy was not in a position to give him, because at that time he did not have any property not even the ownership of his works. And Gopal Chetty whose affairs soon improved showed understanding and respect for this fact.

In these years the Indian journalist wrote and published in India a series of articles on Tolstoy. He took an active

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30 & 31. Published here for the first time. The originals are kept in Tolstoy's Archives.

part in the publication of Tolstoy's *International Almanac* which came out on the occasion of his 80th anniversary. In his article for the *Almanac* he wrote with veneration about the influence of Tolstoy's thought on the Indian intelligentsia. He stated that many of his countrymen looked at Tolstoy as the lord of thought and their moral tutor, that Leo Nikolaevich's portrait which was hanging in his room was an object of worship.

Later on, in 1909, Gopal Chetty published from Madras a book called *Count Leo Tolstoy, His Life and Teaching*. This was one of the first Indian books on Tolstoy. As in other Chetty's works on Tolstoy this book expresses a deep reverence for the artistic genius of the Russian writer. The author speaks in it of the powerful influence of Tolstoy's artistic images and he warmly advocates the popularization of his works in India.

The numbers of *The New Reformer* came to Yasnaya Polyana also during the last year of Tolstoy's life, and he always read them with great interest.

The sympathetic letter of Tolstoy to Chetty and the interest for Indian culture expressed in it induced other Indian editors also to start correspondence with the Russian writer. One of them, Professor Rama Deva, editor of the journal "New Reformer" in Madras it can be seen that you on 12 November 1907 the following letter:

"Respected Sir, From your letter to the editor of the journal "New Reformer" in Madras it can be seen that you are interested in Indian philosophy and the moral teachings of our great teachers. . . I take courage in sending you a number "The Vedic Magazine". This journal has been founded with the sole purpose of reviving the interest in the ancient Indian epics, and also to support the Academy Guru Kula—a new educational institution, the prospectus of which I am sending to you. Any advice from you will be accepted with the greatest gratitude. Shall we dare to hope that you will always collaborate in our journal? Your articles will be read with gratitude by thousands of your

admirers in India."<sup>32</sup>

This letter reached Yasnaya Polyana before the journal, and Tolstoy noted on the envelope: "To reply when the journal will be received."<sup>33</sup> Soon the journal was received, and Tolstoy went through it. We have already spoken about his attitude towards the ancient Indian Vedas. Tolstoy considered them as a very brilliant expression of the Indian national genius and the Vedic period in Indian philosophy as one of the most fruitful. That is why in his reply he encouraged the editor of the journal to continue his activity in the field he had chosen.<sup>34</sup>

On 21 January 1908, Rama Deva sent to Yasnaya Polyana a second letter in which he warmly thanked the Russian writer for his sympathy and support. "I am quite sure," he wrote "that if such great people as you, approve our work, it will be successful and our humble labour will be crowned with success. May I request you to send an article about the East and the West—a comparison. I shall be very grateful to you for it."<sup>35</sup>

During the following months Tolstoy enjoyed reading the issues of the *Vedic Magazine*. In Tolstoy's diary one can find reference to the various articles which interested him. So on 14 October 1909, he noted that he had read in the journal an excellent article "Plato and Shankara Acharya". "I should write a letter of thanks to the Hindu for his excellent account on Maya," he remarked.<sup>36</sup>

On 3 November 1909, Tolstoy fulfilled his correspondent's request and sent Rama Deva a long letter. "I thank you very much," he wrote, "for the *Vedic Magazine* which you so kindly sent me. I always read it with great interest. In the last number I received, Vol. III, No. 4, I appreciated

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32. Published here for the first time. The English original is kept in Tolstoy's Archives.

33. 77.317.

34. See the letter written on instruction of Tolstoy in the middle of November, 1907 (77.317).

35. Published here for the first time. The original is kept in Tolstoy's Archives.

36. 57.152.

the article very much... "Plato and Shankara Acharya". You would do me a great kindness if you would agree to help me in a work I recently began. This work, I hope, will be of some interest to you".<sup>37</sup>

The matter was about his intention to publish in Russia a series of books through which the most important philosophical and ethical teachings of the East could be expounded. The Vedas were in this respect particularly interesting and Tolstoy needed material on them.

"If you or some of your collaborators could help me in this by corresponding with me on this subject I shall be very grateful," he concluded his letter.<sup>38</sup>

Rama Deva immediately responded to this request and sent to Yasnaya Polyana a number of works relating to the Vedas. In his letter of 28 January 1910, he expressed his readiness to help Tolstoy, to answer any of his questions and to send all the material necessary.<sup>39</sup>

For several months Tolstoy read the books Rama Deva sent to him and used them in compiling his collections of sayings.

This was the end of the correspondence with Rama Deva, but the *Vedic Magazine* continued to be received in Yasnaya Polyana till the end and was one of the main sources of Tolstoy's knowledge about the early period of the history of Indian philosophy.<sup>40</sup>

Among other Indians who corresponded with the Russian writer one should also mention Abdullah-al-Mamun Suhrawardy, Ph. D., a well-known jurist and journalist in his country. At the beginning of the century he published from London the journal *The Light of the World* in which he defended the idea of the National Liberation of India and friendship among its peoples. After returning to his country he continued his public activity and at the same

37. 80.155.

38. *ibid.*

39. The letter has not been published. The original is kept in Tolstoy's Archives.

40. In the Yasnaya Polyana Library there are several numbers of the journal with Tolstoy's notes.



time studied the ancient Indian philosophy.

On 9 November 1907, Suhrawardy wrote to Tolstoy expressing his desire to collaborate in the publication of his works in India.

"I would like very much," he wrote, "to translate into Bengali those among your books which can be useful to the Indian people beginning from the novel *Resurrection* which enjoys world fame. It would be a great honour for me if you would allow me to do it and if you would send me your photograph with a short sketch of your life and creative work or if you would let me have the names of those books where I could find the description of your life."<sup>41</sup>

Along with his letter Suhrawardy sent to Yasnaya Polyana his pamphlet "The Sayings of Mahomet" composed on the basis of the Muslim folk sayings.

This book was very useful to Tolstoy and he thanked the sender very warmly. He included some of the sayings in his collection, *Circle of Reading*. Tolstoy allowed his Indian correspondent to translate into Bengali any of his works, and advised him to begin with the article "About Life". He advised him to write to V. G. Chertkov in London for his biographical data.<sup>42</sup>

Tolstoy's letter confirmed Suhrawardy in his intention to translate the works of the Russian writer. On 9 January 1908, he sent to Yasnaya Polyana from Calcutta another letter in which he said that he had received from Chertkov several books and a photo of Count Leo Nikolayevich and that he was setting to work.<sup>43</sup>

We do not know whether Suhrawardy was able to translate anything and whether his translations were published. It is only known that in the following years he was one of the most ardent advocates of Tolstoy's artistic inheritance in India.

41. Published here for the first time. The English original is kept in Tolstoy's Archives.

42. 77.241.

43. The letter has not been published. It is preserved in Tolstoy's Archives.

In 1908 Suhrawardy sent to *The International Tolstoy's Almanac* an article on the occasion of the writer's 80th anniversary. Tolstoy read it in the manuscript form and expressed distress at its excessively laudatory tone. Since Leo Nikolayevich was ill at that time, the reply to Suhrawardy was written by Chertkov.

The Indian professor replied with the following letter:

"I express my hearty gratitude to you for having been so kind as to have asked Mr. Chertkov to write to me and to acknowledge receipt of my letter with enclosure. Your thoughtfulness even when you are ill is truly worthy of your great image. The sad news about your illness has worried and distressed all of us."

With reference to the excessive praise he wrote: "The fault is in my soul which considers you as such. . . I would like very much that the Russian people should know what is the attitude of a young Indian towards Tolstoy."<sup>44</sup>

This was the end of Tolstoy's correspondence with Suhrawardy.

Among the Indian correspondents of Tolstoy there was also one R. M. Das Sharma, at that time a well-known scholar of ancient Indian philosophy. In connection with a philosophical debate which was to take place in his town he wrote to the Russian writer on 25 September 1903, asking a number of questions of a philosophical character. In his letter of 4 November 1903, Tolstoy replied to some of them and then referred to his works in which Sharma could find answers to his other questions.

In January 1908, philosopher S. R. Chittall sent a letter to Yasnaya Polyana from Bombay. This letter has not been preserved in Tolstoy's Archives, but judging by the entry in the register of incoming mail, the author of the letter compared the Russian writer to the greatest thinkers of India. On 3 February 1908, Tolstoy replied to him with a long letter in which he first of all deprecated the exaggerated praise regarding himself. He then underlined his deep

<sup>44</sup> Published here for the first time. The original is kept in Tolstoy's Archives.

interest in Indian philosophy and discussed with Chittall some problems relating to the *Bhagawad Gita*. Along with the letter to the Indian scholar were sent many books and pamphlets of Tolstoy.

Among other Indians who wrote to Tolstoy on philosophical and religious problems one may mention also the editor of *Brahti Marga Sahib* from Bangalore, a lady editing a Calcutta journal, Minni Robinson, the publicist from Madras, Vaidyanathan, and others. All of them thanked Tolstoy for his interest in Indian philosophy and religion and sent him books and journals. They noted in their letters the great popularity of his works in India and their influence on the Indian intelligentsia. Some offered him help in translation, publication and popularization of his literary and philosophic works in India.

## Manifesto in Defence of India

BESIDES problems of culture, literature and philosophy discussed by Tolstoy in his correspondence with Indians there were also social problems of India: chronic hunger, ruin of the peasantry, the growth of poverty, the disastrous position of the country under the yoke of the colonial rule and the struggle of the people for national liberation. These burning problems agitated the Russian writer more than anything else.

Tolstoy's great interest in the social problems of Indian life, as already said, can be explained by the fact that the beginning of the 20th century was marked by a sharp increase of colonial exploitation and oppression of the peoples of the East. In a number of articles of this period Lenin noted that with the coming of the Imperialist era the English bourgeoisie had been committing unbelievable crimes in India. "There is no end," he wrote, "to the violence and plunder which are called the system of the English administration of India."<sup>1</sup> At the same time Lenin stated that under the influence of the Russian revolution the national liberation struggle had intensified in all the countries of Asia including India. "World capitalism and the Russian movement of 1905," he wrote, "have definitely awakened Asia. Hundreds of millions of downtrodden men, grown wild under feudal stagnation, have woken up to the need for a new life and the struggle for the elementary rights of man, for democracy."<sup>2</sup>

As we have seen Tolstoy reacted strongly to the news about Imperialist plunder in China. He also looked with

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1. V.I. Lenin, "The Combustibles in World Politics", *Works*, Vol. 15, pp. 160-161.

2. V.I. Lenin, "Wakening of Asia", *Works*, Vol. 15, p. 66.

alarm at what was going on in India.

In 1908 after the publication by the world press of Tolstoy's famous pamphlet *I cannot remain silent*, the flow of letters arriving at Yasnaya Polyana greatly increased. Many Indians, admiring such courageous writing against the crimes of Russian Tzarism, appealed to him to make a statement also against the British rulers in India. These letters made Tolstoy decide to write an open letter to the Indian people in order to blame publicly the British in India and to unmask them before the entire world. At the same time he wanted to wean away the Indian people from their addiction to Western civilization which was, according to him, one of the causes of their desperate state.

A direct stimulus for issuing the message was a letter received by Tolstoy in June 1908 from the Indian patriot and publicist Taraknath Das who, along with the letter, had sent two numbers of the journal, *Free Hindustan*, published by him.

Taraknath Das belonged to the group of the so-called extremists in the Indian national movement, who led a decisive struggle for the liberation of their enslaved country.

When 22 years old he emigrated from his native Bengal to Canada and there, among Indian students, workers and farm labourers, he formed a revolutionary group which aspired to organise the people of India for an armed uprising against the British rule. In order to propagate these revolutionary ideas he started, in Vancouver, the journal *Free Hindustan*. The journal was sent to India<sup>3</sup> and also partly reached Indians in U.S.A. and Europe.

The journal, of which two numbers had been received in Yasnaya Polyana, with a dedication by the publisher",

3. For details about Taraknath Das see article: N. M. Goldberg, "Indian journals in the Yasnaya Polyana Library as one of the sources for the study of the national-liberation movement in India," *Soviet Oriental Studies* (Советско-Восточноеведение), 1955, No. 4.

4. The dedication read: "To Count Leo Tolstoy with deep respect from Taraknath Das, May 23, 1908." Later on



had a frankly revolutionary character. From the leading article to the news items it was polemically directed against the so-called moderates, i.e., the party of the big Indian bourgeoisie and landlords who were in favour of a gradual realisation of self-government by means of agreement with the British rulers. The slogans printed on its cover clearly illustrate the trend of the journal: "*Free Hindustan* is an organ of freedom and of political, social and religious reforms."

"Resistance against tyranny is obedience to God" (in the issues of 1909, the words "obedience to God" were replaced with the words "Service to mankind and a necessity for civilization").

"Every man is free to do what he wants on the condition that he does not infringe upon an equal freedom of any other man" (H. Spenser, *Fundamentals of Ethics*, Section 272).

"Resistance to violence not only is justified but it is compulsory. Non-resistance is contradictory to altruism as well as to egoism" (H. Spenser, *A Study of Sociology*, Chapter 8).

The articles of the journal were true to the spirit of these slogans. They sometimes contained an appeal to insurrection.<sup>5</sup>

No less stern was Taraknath Das's letter. Unlike many other letters, it contained irrefutable facts regarding the

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Tolstoy received also other numbers of the journal with dedications by its publisher. In the Yasnaya Polyana Library numbers for April-October, 1908, January, February, May-August, November and December, 1908, and for March and April, 1910 have been preserved. On many of their pages there are notes by Tolstoy.

5. Another journal, *The Indian Sociologist*, which was also received at that time in Yasnaya Polyana had a similar political programme. It was published in London by Krishna Varma, one of the militant comrades of the famous leader of the Indian Socialists, Tilak. Issues of *The Indian Sociologist* of June and July 1908, with notes by Tolstoy have been preserved in Yasnaya Polyana.

regime in India. And Tolstoy, needless to say, could not but reply to it. Tarakanath Das's letter of 24 May 1908, written from Seattle, said:

"Dear Sir, in our days your name serves as a shield and as a weapon for those who work for the well-being of mankind. Your works in which you have shown the life of the oppressed Russian people have opened the eyes of the civilized world and have aroused a deep sympathy for them.

"Your moral strength has even weakened the autocratic power of the Russian Government which has always persecuted all that was progressive; it has been frightened by your activity and compelled to compromise and silence.

"Indeed, the Russian people is enslaved, but they are not the most oppressed people, if their conditions of existence are compared with the situation of the Indian people. You are acquainted with the history of all the peoples of the world, and you know in what state of enslavement we live. In Sir William Digby's book *Prosperous British India* it has been proved beyond doubt, that during ten years, from 1891 to 1900, 19 million men died of hunger in India, while during the last 107 years from 1793-1900 only five million men died in wars in the entire world. You hate war, but hunger in India is more terrible than any war. It occurs in India, not due to shortage of food, but because of the plundering of the people and by the ravaging of the country by the British Government. Is it not a shame that millions of people in India are hungry, while the English traders export from India thousands of tons of rice and other food-stuffs?

"The population of India suffers greatly. The British policy in India represents by itself a menace to the entire Christian civilisation.

"By your publicist writings you have brought great good to Russia. We beseech you, if only you could make the time, to write an article and to state your opinion about the sad position of India. On behalf of millions of Indians dying of hunger I appeal to your Christian spirit and I beg

you to support us.

"Under separate cover I am sending to you for your information two numbers of the journal *Free Hindustan*."<sup>6</sup>

As has already been said, the letter worried Tolstoy. Of course he had earlier also received news about the critical situation in India which was no news to him. But this time it was a distress signal addressed to him personally. And he immediately took up his pen.

Tolstoy began to write his message—a reply to Taraknath Das's letter—on 7 June 1908, but he finished it only after six months. The 29 versions preserved in Tolstoy's archives which altogether form 413 sheets of manuscript show how difficult and agonizing this work proved to be for him. Tolstoy did not have enough time, he was compelled to tear himself away from other important affairs. But, according to us, there was also a more substantial circumstance: Tolstoy again and again pondered whether the advice he intended to give to the Indian people was suitable.

Having drafted the first version of his article in three days—from 7th to 9th June 1908, Tolstoy, as noted in his diary, at once "stopped short".<sup>7</sup> It seemed to him that he did not have sufficient factual material and at his instance D. P. Makovitzki requested Taraknath Das to send it.

In August, Tolstoy again began to write the article and prepared a new version. But this time also he was not satisfied with it and put it aside. In September, in Yasnaya Polyana, a letter arrived from an unknown rank-and-file Indian intellectual, a teacher, named G. D. Kumar, who had been obliged to emigrate to Canada and who from there was appealing for help. This letter might have induced

6. Taraknath Das's letter to Tolstoy was considered lost for half a century. P. I. Biryukov in his book *Tolstoi und der Orient* (p. 50) wrote with regret that in spite of careful research the letter could not be found. However we have been able to discover it in Tolstoy's archives. The letter was published in the journal *Sovetskie Vostokovedenie*,

1957, No. 1.

7. 56.133.

Tolstoy to resume his work on the article about India and to complete it soon. Here is what the Indian teacher wrote, in his letter of 21 August 1908:

"Respected Sir, I have come to know from the newspapers about the help you have rendered to your countrymen<sup>8</sup> and about the great impression your articles have made on the Western countries, particularly England, U.S.A. and Canada. Thanks to your articles, the English people is supporting the Russian people, despite the friendship between the English King Edward VII and the Russian Tzar. From this I make the inference: The truth always remains the truth and it will shine like the sun in the firmament even if it is covered by clouds.

"Only you, you alone, with the might of your pen have shown to the peoples of the West what cruelty reigns in Russia. Thanks to you the English have begun to go to Russia to see with their own eyes what is happening there under the semblance of Russian justice. . .

"But what is happening in India nobody knows beyond the frontiers of this country. It is known only to the suffering masses of the Indian people and the men thrown into prisons. If an Indian appeals for justice to the English he is at once accused of rebellion and is either imprisoned or exiled to an Indian Siberia. Recently a man like Tilak, the leader of the national movement, was accused of instigating rebellion and was exiled for six years.

"Many Indian patriots, editors of newspapers, have become victims of the British arbitrary rule and injustice. We do not know what to do and therefore we request you to come to India and to see with your own eyes what is happening there. Your kind and generous heart will be touched when you will see what is the praised British justice. The Russian yoke is distressing for your peoples, but the English yoke is much heavier for the native population of India.

"India is a paradise for the whites, but it is a hell for the Indians. The Russian people cannot be compared with

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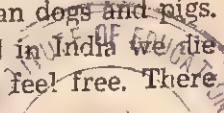
8. The reference is to Tolstoy's article "I cannot be silent".

the people of India on account of the crucial fact that the national income in your country is not exported in order to enrich a dominating power, as is the case in India. The Russians can spread their money in Russia, while India pays to England 30 million pounds sterling every year. Imagine to yourself that only during the last two hundred years England exported from India six milliard pounds sterling in gold. . .

"The population of India is 300 millions. The income per capita of the population is one pound sterling per year. The taxes absorb 75 per cent of the income. The mortality of the population is greater than the birth-rate. Over 20 million men died recently of plague and hunger in India. Hunger is widespread and this is not due to crop failure or failure of rains but because grain is being exported to Europe. It is quite possible that there is enough grain for our population despite the exports, but the people have no money to purchase it. Taxes are to be paid before the harvest is reaped and therefore the farmers have to sell standing crops for next to nothing. The authorities do not take into account the failure of crops or poor harvest. Taxes are extorted the whole year round. Every ten years taxes are raised. . .

"The millions extracted from the people of India are spent in order to maintain the armies of John Bull while for the national education of the Indians next to nothing is spent. Among the male population of India hardly 5 percent are literate. Throughout the country there is not a single college for women.

"We have been under the rule of England for 200 years already, and as a result we now have no place to live. We are compelled to emigrate to South Africa. There for next to nothing we cleared the land, built roads, we helped the whites to settle down and now we are ejected also from there. The English treat us there worse than dogs and pigs. Australia and Canada are closed to us and in India we die of hunger. Nowhere on the earth can we feel free. There





is no place for us on the earth. . .

"And all this we endure because we are the slaves of the English, who beat us and do not even allow us to appeal to heaven. The only thing that remains to us is to attract the attention of people, like you, who can unmask the English in front of the entire world and by doing this exert influence upon them.

"We trust that you will lend us a helping hand and that you will aid justice to triumph in India.

"You are born Russian, but the entire world belongs to you. You are a great man, your greatness manifests itself in the care of the unfortunate. Do believe, the peoples of India are even more oppressed than the Russian people. In the hope for your help I join my hearty congratulations to those of other people on the occasion of your 80th anniversary and I implore you on behalf of my countrymen to help them as far as possible."

Soon after this letter, Taraknath Das wrote and sent several publications on 'the present situation in India'<sup>9</sup>, and regretted that he did not have more books which he could send."

9. The complete text is published here for the first time. An extract from the letter was published in the *Soviet Land*, Delhi, 1957, No. 14. It is known about G. D. Kumar that after he returned from abroad he taught Hindi and Urdu in the National College, Calcutta, and collaborated with leftist newspapers.

10. Of the material sent by him the following booklet has been preserved in the Yasnaya Polyana Library: W. Wedderburn, *The Skeleton at the Jubilee feast being a series of suggestions towards the presentation of famine in India*, London, 1897. A photograph showing a group of Indians exhausted by hunger is attached to the booklet. On the cover there is the inscription in English: "To Count Leo Tolstoy with hearty greetings from Taraknath Das on behalf of India and of the suffering millions."

11. Among the other books and pamphlets on India, besides those mentioned, the following have been preserved in the Yasnaya Polyana Library: H. M. Hyndman, *The Ruin of India by British Rule*, London, 1907; *The Unofficial Commission for Inquiry of the Disorders in Mymensingh*,

On receipt of this material from Taraknath Das, Tolstoy again began to work on his article and soon completed it. Thus was written his famous "A Letter to an Indian" which, as we shall see later, was destined to play an important role in the East.

Tolstoy began his article by saying that the disastrous situation of the oppressed people deeply worried him. "The oppression of a majority by the minority of a people and the corruption inevitably resulting from it is a phenomenon that has always occupied my mind and has done so most particularly of late."<sup>12</sup>

Tolstoy wanted to analyze the causes of the dismal calamity under which the Indian people were living. Throughout the world, he noted, "this astonishing fact emerges that a majority of the working people submit to a mere handful of idlers, who dispose of not only their labour but also their very life." This could be seen everywhere whether the oppressors and the oppressed belong to the same nation or, as was the case in India, the oppressors belonged to an entirely different nation from the oppressed.

"This phenomenon seems particularly strange in India, for here we have a people two hundred millions in number, highly endowed with spiritual and physical powers, in subjection to a small group, composed of persons utterly alien to them in thought and immeasurably inferior in religious morality to those whom they enslave."

Tolstoy saw the cause of this unnatural, incomprehensible phenomenon in the fact that the enslaved people looked for the means of liberation from unbearable oppres-

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Calcutta, 1908; E. Digby, *Mymensingh*, Calcutta, 1908; *Debate on the address in reply to the Queen's Speech*, Speech delivered by Dadabhai Naoroji, London, 1895; P. Mimaude, *Le Mamoul*, Paris, M. de Marles, *Histoire General de l'Inde ancienne et moderne depuis l'an 2000 avant J. C. jusqu'a nos jours...*, Paris, 1828; Rose Reinhardt Anthen, *Stories of India moral, mystical, spiritual and romantic*, Los Angeles, 1906.

12. Here and below "A Letter to an Indian" is quoted according to the complete works of Tolstoy, Vol. 37, pp. 245-272.

sion not in their own national structure but in embracing those "deeply immoral forms of social order in which the English and other pseudo-Christian nations live today."

In order to show the extent of the injustice inherent in the social basis of the modern property-owning world, Tolstoy analysed the history of human society and showed that oppression was always based on violence, which in its turn rested on the belief of the oppressed people in the divine rights of the rulers. In former times, the foundation of oppression was the mute acceptance by the peoples of the supernatural rights of the rulers: Tzars, Sultans, Rajas, Shahs and others. Later on, people's belief in the divine rights of monarchs became weaker and consequently weaker became also the power of these Lord's anointed rulers.

"But unfortunately, however," wrote Tolstoy "not only have these monarchs, deemed divinely appointed, availed themselves of the advantages accruing from ruling over nations everywhere, but during their domination and owing to the existence of these pseudo-supernatural beings, an ever-increasing number of persons sprang up who established themselves near the courts, and under the guise of governing the people lived upon their labours. And this governing class has taken steps that, as the old religious fraud that the divine rule of monarchs was instituted by God himself decays in influence, another and similar deception should take its place and having superseded the old one, should continue in the same way as the old one, to keep nations in slavery to a limited number of rulers."

Speaking about the new forms of deception propagated by the oppressors, Tolstoy attacked with great vehemence the "allegedly scientific superstition" which, according to him, replaced the religious superstition.

The prevailing bourgeois sociological theories and foremost among them the 'theory' that the oppression of some by others was an indestructible historical law, were considered by Tolstoy as a new but false justification of violence. Among the pseudo-scientific theories Tolstoy justly includes also the Malthusian theory of the struggle for

existence which mechanically applied the rules of nature existing in the animal kingdom to human society, as well as the various "theories" of the bourgeois law which justify the injustices of a property-owning society with references to the electoral form of government, to the will of the people.

"Such are the scientific justifications of the principle of coercion. These justifications are not only groundless, but simply absurd; yet they are needed by people occupying privileged positions who blindly believe in them and as confidently propagate them as they formerly did the doctrine of the immaculate conception. The unfortunate majority, weighed down by toil, is so dazzled by the pomp which accompanies the dissemination of these 'scientific truths', that under this new influence, it accepts all those scientific follies as holy truth as readily as it formerly accepted the pseudo-religious justifications, and continues to submit slavishly to the new potentates who are just as cruel, but who have somewhat increased in number."

Tolstoy directed the later chapters of his 'Letter' against the slogans of revolutionary resistance inscribed on the cover of the journal *Free Hindustan*. The situation of the peoples of the East, in particular of India, is analyzed in them. He saw the main cause of the enslavement of the peoples in the fact that they had repudiated their spiritual past and adopted the ideas of the European bourgeois civilization. One could have hoped, he complained, that these peoples having such a rich ancient culture, based on high moral principles, would have proved unreceptive to the pernicious and false 'scientific superstition' spread in the countries of Europe and America and which brought so many misfortunes and calamities to their people. But it turned out that this 'superstition' (Tolstoy here implied the bourgeois progress) had already penetrated into the countries of the East and caused no little devastation. "It has now a specially strong hold on the land of the extreme East, Japan, and not only on its leaders, but on the majority of the people and is the precursor of the greatest calamities.



It has taken hold of China with her 400 millions of inhabitants and also of your India with her 200 millions..." In this very fact the writer saw one of the causes of the moral weakness of the Indians in their struggle against the colonial power.

"A commercial company enslaved a nation comprising 200 millions," exclaimed Tolstoy. "Tell this to a man free from superstition and he will fail to grasp what these words mean. What does it mean that thirty thousand people, not athletes, but rather weak and ill-looking have enslaved 200 millions of vigorous, clever, strong, freedom-loving people?"

The root of the evil, according to the Russian writer, was that the Indians still obey the oppressors, even though unwillingly, because they profess the same 'religion of violence.'<sup>13</sup> If the Indian people, affirmed Tolstoy, followed the teachings of their ancient sages and did not submit to the oppressors, no force in the world could subjugate them. "Do not resist evil, but also yourselves do not participate in evil, in the violent deeds of the administration, of the law courts, the collection of taxes, and what is more important, of the soldiers, and no one in the world will enslave you."—Such was Tolstoy's advice to the Indian people.

This does not mean that the Russian writer recommended to the Indians to submit to the British, as some of the research workers in the West have affirmed. No, Tolstoy urged the Indians to put up resistance, but he imagined it in the 'peaceful' form of non-participation in the colonial administration, refusal to pay taxes, to serve in the army, courts and so on.

Towards the end, Tolstoy expounded in his article his

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13. In A. B. Goldenveizer's diary the following statement by Tolstoy about India is noted: "... the people is perishing, millions die every year of famine under the yoke of the English, and out of the 200 thousand troops in India—hundred and fifty thousand are Indians. They themselves enslave." (*Near Tolstoy*, Vol. 1, p. 218, note of 5 July 1908.)



positive programme of opposition to the 'superstitions' which ruin mankind. According to him, the world was now passing through a period when mankind must inevitably move to a new level of consciousness which would bring it to a more mature and rational existence.

"... I believe," he wrote, "that the time for such a transition of humanity from one age to another has now arrived—not in the sense that it has come in the year 1908, but (in the sense) that the inherent contradictions of human life have in our days reached an extreme degree of tension: on the one hand there is the consciousness of the beneficence of the law of love, and, on the other, the existing system of life which for centuries occasioned in humanity an empty, irritating, troubled mode of life conflicting with the law of love and built upon the use of violence. The tension is such that this contradiction must be solved and it will evidently be solved not in favour of the outlived law of violence, but in favour of the truth which has dwelt in the hearts of men from remote antiquity: the truth that the law of love is in accord with the nature of man."

But how will "the law of love triumph among men"? In replying to this question Tolstoy betrayed the weakness of his conception. While he justly attacked obsolete prejudices and urged mankind to be free of them, he cursed the entire modern civilization. His hatred of the bitter fruits of the bourgeois culture developed in him an anarchic rebellion against all the achievements of human culture, which in the heat of the argument he placed on the same level as the false canons of the official religion. He appeals to people to free themselves from belief in "all kinds of Ormuzds, Brahmas, Sabaoths and their incarnations as Krishnas and Christs" and also from "the blind belief in all sorts of scientific teachings about infinitely small atoms, molecules, about all kinds of infinitely great and infinitely remote worlds, their movements and their origin".

Scornfully regarding them as absurd, he wrote, about

"futile exercises of our lower capacities of mind and memory called the Sciences" among which he placed the innumerable divisions of all sorts of histories, anthropologies, homiletics, bacteriologies, jurisprudences, cosmographies, strategies—their name is legion. All this, from the point of view of the writer, is a "pernicious, stupefying ballast", which conceals from men "the simple, clear law of love, accessible to everybody and solving all problems and all perplexities".

Tolstoy ended the article by affirming that the enslaved Indians as well as all the peoples throughout the world needed not "constitutions, and revolutions, nor all sorts of conferences and congresses, nor many ingenious devices for submarine navigation and aerial navigation, nor powerful explosives, nor all sorts of conveniences for the pleasure of the rich, ruling classes; nor new schools and universities where innumerable disciplines were taught, nor an augmentation of newspapers and books, nor gramophones and cinemas, nor those childish and, for the most part, corrupt stupidities which are termed art", but the consciousness of the "law of love", which gives the highest happiness to mankind.

"If people would only free their consciousness from those mountains of nonsense which hide from them the indubitable eternal truth inherent in men, which is one and the same in all the great religions of the world, the truth then will reveal itself at once in spite of all that pseudo-religious nonsense which now conceals it. And as soon as this truth is revealed to the consciousness of men, all that stupidity which now hides it will disappear of itself and with it will go also the evil from which humanity now suffers."

Despite one's admiration for the great writer one cannot help being surprised at the rather weak and utopian character of this 'programme'. As in his 'Letter to the Chinaman' and in his other addresses to enslaved peoples Tolstoy proposed here also the abstract moral 'Law of Love'; here also he urged his readers to "come to their

senser", to "think over", to "free themselves", without showing concretely how this could be achieved under conditions of bourgeois domination. As before he affirmed that only the adoption of the law of love could 'by itself' alter the entire social organization based on exploitation and violence in the world. These arguments remain part of Tolstoy's fundamental attitude based upon abstract dogmas.

But at the same time one should not underestimate Tolstoy's criticism of colonialism contained in his 'Letter to an Indian'. Despite his desire (for peaceful solution of problems) and his gospel of non-violence, this letter as well as his other letters and articles addressed to the peoples of the East played a revolutionary role at the time: they woke up the enslaved peoples, opened their eyes to the prevailing injustice, called upon them to resist the oppressors. It was not by chance that the colonial governments of India and of other countries banned the 'Letter to an Indian' along with other revolutionary literature which directly called for revolt.

This article aroused a very large response throughout the world. This is testified to by innumerable letters received by Tolstoy from England, France, Germany, China, U.S.A., Japan and other countries. Romain Rolland wrote: "'Letter to an Indian' has been made known throughout the whole world delivering terrific blows to colonial slavery."<sup>14</sup> It provoked a passionate discussion between the supporters and the opponents of the idea of 'violence'. The so-called moderates in India, the majority of whom considered themselves to be the supporters of 'non-violence', declared that the 'Letter to an Indian' reinforced their ideological and political positions. This was not completely so, because Tolstoy repudiated any form of participation in the State government as cooperation with the ruling power, while the moderates renounced only the most effective methods of struggle and often came to an agreement with the Bri-

14. See Romain Rolland, "Asia's reply to Tolstoy", *Collected Works*, Vol. 14, Moscow, 1938, p. 339.

tish bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, the newspapers and journals of the 'moderates' publicised the 'Letter to an Indian' and accepted it.

A different position was held by the so-called 'Extremists', i.e., the supporters of revolutionary methods of struggle in India. In their propaganda, 'Letter to an Indian' was used only in so far as it contained a criticism of the colonial rule. But they decisively rejected the conception of the 'Letter' on the whole considering the idea of non-violence as false and incapable of bringing the Indian people to victory.

How very acute was the ideological struggle over Tolstoy's 'Letter to an Indian' can be seen from the fact that soon after its publication in October 1909, a pamphlet by Tarakanath Das was published in India under the title of 'An Open Letter to Count Leo Tolstoy in reply to his letter to an Indian'.<sup>15</sup>

This pamphlet is one of the illuminating documents of the Indian revolutionary press. It chiefly consists of the criticism of the idea of non-violence. With the help of historical facts the author of the pamphlet proved that submissiveness and non-resistance never brought about victory, but almost always weakened and disarmed the popular masses, and finally led them to defeat. The idea of non-resistance, the author affirmed, did not diminish, but increased the evil on the earth. Non-resistance encouraged the oppressors, made it easier for them to accomplish their infamous aims and brought them closer to triumph over the weak and the unarmed.

Violence, the author made a reservation, by itself is not at all the ideal of the revolutionary. On the contrary, "if there are no signs of aggression and of tyranny there is no need of our dogma. But since good and evil exist, since the rights of the weak are usurped by the strong and since:

15. See A. V. Raikov, "The Open Letter of Tarakanath Das to Leo Tolstoy", *Soviet Vostokovedenie*. 1957, No. 4, pp. 125-126. Further on, Tarakanath Das's letter is quoted on the basis of this report.



differences among men remain in the world, our principle (i.e., the principle of the revolutionary violent struggle) remains true and it remains real as an active expression and manifestation of love for mankind until the Nav-yug will come".

Analysing further the programme and the practice of the supporters of passive resistance in India, Taraknath Das affirmed that the very conception of 'non-violence' is illusive. The principle of non-violence, even if we want it, cannot be consistently fulfilled because any discontent and protest in whatever form it is expressed is already a manifestation of violence against those against whom it is directed. And this is unavoidable. In support of this, Das referred to the journalistic activity of Tolstoy himself.

"You," he wrote addressing himself to Tolstoy, "by raising your powerful voice of protest against the oppression of the majority by the minority of the people, with your statements and articles decisively resist the idea of special privileges on which tyranny is based and you preach the inviolability of equal rights. . . Your actions are a violence in respect of the people against whose interests they are directed."

Taraknath Das accepted Tolstoy's idea of a society in which there would be no oppression of man by man. He believed in the final triumph of good over evil, of the people over their oppressors. But the path towards the achievement of this ideal, he said, was not through fatalism and non-violence, but through the social struggle, not for life, but to death.

With particular sharpness the author of the 'Open Letter' spoke about the British authorities in India. There can be no talk of any agreement or collaboration with them, he said. "We believe," he wrote in the Letter. "in general brotherhood, but we do not tolerate any exploitation of any nation, race, society, family, individual by others." The task of progressive people in India consisted in "never supporting the base instincts or premeditated action directed towards plundering one nation by another, as is being done



now by the British Government in India, but to unmask, and if possible to destroy it. . . For the sake of preserving the Indian as well as other peoples, in the name of humanism we need action in resisting aggression from outside and from inside. If the Indian people want to live, they must free themselves from the British rule."

"The Open letter to Count Leo Tolstoy" ended with the exposition of the political programme of its author and of those circles which he represented. This consisted first of all of the destruction of the British colonial rule in India and complete self-Government for the Indian people, and then the large-scale development of national education, the handing over of the entire industry, agriculture and commerce into the hands of the Indians, etc. He showed acquaintance with the European revolutionary movement and his closeness to its more radical leftist wing.

It is not known whether the 'Open Letter' reached Tolstoy or not. It is difficult to imagine that Taraknath Das who corresponded with the Russian writer should not have sent him this pamphlet, which contained the reply to arguments set out in the 'Letter to an Indian'. However, neither in the diary, nor in the notebooks of that period, nor in the entry registers in which Tolstoy's mail was registered is there any mention of the pamphlet. Probably it did not reach Yasnaya Polyana. But there is no doubt that it was known in Russia among Russian revolutionaries. One copy of the pamphlet is kept now in the library of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow.

## Tolstoy and Gandhi

ONE of the readers who responded to his 'Letter to an Indian' (also known as 'Letter to a Hindoo' and who entered into correspondence with Tolstoy was to play an outstanding role in the destiny of his country. This was Mchandas Karamchand Gandhi, then a young advocate leading the struggle of his countrymen for justice in South Africa.

Gandhi has related the circumstances, thanks to which his correspondence with the great writer began<sup>1</sup>, in his *Autobiography* and in his book *Satyagraha in South Africa* where he has fully described the struggle of the Indians against racial discrimination in the Transvaal. As recorded by him, Gandhi had read Tolstoy long before the beginning of his correspondence with him. In fact by then he had already adopted many of Tolstoy's ideas. He was particularly influenced by Tolstoy's book *The Kingdom of God is within You*. "It left an indelible impression," he wrote. "Faced with the independent thinking, deep morality and truthfulness of this book, it appeared to me that all the other books recommended to me by Mr. Coates<sup>2</sup> had grown pale."

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1. The correspondence between Tolstoy and Gandhiji was first published in an incomplete form by P. I. Biryukov in the collection *Tolstoi und er Orient*, pp. 70-77. In 1933 it was reproduced in Russian in the collection "Literary Inheritance", No. 37-38, pp. 339-352, with detailed notes by A. N. Sergeenko. In 1957, the author of the present work published the second letter of Gandhi to Tolstoy which was unknown in USSR and which he found in Tolstoy's archives. See his "Leo Tolstoy—Friend of India," *Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie*, 1957, No. 1, pp. 95-105.
  2. Quoted from: M. K. Gandhi, *My Life*, Moscow, 1959, p. 114.

Tolstoy's literary works, most of all the novel, *Resurrection*, made the same impression on him. The young Indian thinker, as he himself admitted, had been waiting to establish a link with the great Russian writer for a long time.

On 1 October 1909, Gandhi wrote his first letter to Tolstoy from London where he had come for negotiations with members of the British Government. At that time a bitter struggle was developing in South Africa between the Indian population and the authorities whose so-called Black Law had placed the Indians in a condition of discrimination and virtual slavery. In his letter, Gandhi wrote about the cruel repressions to which the Indians were subjected in the Transvaal.

"I take the liberty," thus Gandhi began his letter, "of inviting your attention to what has been going on in the Transvaal (South Africa) for nearly three years.

"There is in that colony a British Indian population of nearly 13,000. These Indians have for several years laboured under the various legal disabilities. The prejudice against colour and in some respect against Asiatics is intense in that colony. It is largely due, so far as Asiatics are concerned, to trade jealousy. The climax was reached three years ago, with a law which I and many others considered to be degrading and calculated to unman those to whom it was applicable."

Having stressed that he and those holding similar views as himself could not consider submitting to such laws, Gandhi went on:

"British Indians before whom the position was fully explained, accepted the advice that we should not submit

3. Here and further on Gandhi's letters, except the second one, are quoted with some corrections in translation from "Literary Inheritance", Nos. 37-38, pp. 339-352. (See: *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* published by the Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. Also *Tolstoy and Gandhi* by Dr. Kalidas Nag, published by Pustak Bhandar, Patna-4. —Translator's note).

to the legislation, but that we should suffer imprisonment, or whatever other penalties the law may impose for its breach. The result has been that nearly one-half of the Indian population, that was unable to stand the heat of the struggle, to suffer the hardships of imprisonment, have withdrawn from the Transvaal rather than submit to law which they have considered degrading. Of the other half, nearly 2,500 have for conscience's sake allowed themselves to be imprisoned, some as many as five times. The imprisonments have varied from four days to six months; in the majority of cases with hard labour. Many have been financially ruined. At present there are over hundred passive resisters in the Transvaal gaols. Some of these have been very poor men, earning their livelihood from day to day. The result has been that their wives and children have had to be supported out of public contributions, also largely raised from passive resisters. This has put a severe strain upon British Indians, but in my opinion they have risen to the occasion. The struggle still continues and one does not know when the end will come. This, however, some of us at least have seen most clearly, that passive resistance will and can succeed where brute force must fail. We also notice that in so far as the struggle has been prolonged, it has been due largely to our weakness, and hence to a belief having been engendered in the mind of the Government that we would not be able to stand continued suffering."

Further he described his mission to England which, in his opinion, did not promise anything beneficial for the Indians. It moreover was a sign of weakness on the part of that section of Indians which so far had not yet understood the uselessness of pleading with the British Government. Gandhi stressed the necessity of strengthening the propagation of the idea of passive resistance throughout the world. One of the forms of such propagation, which would popularise the movement "and would make people think", Gandhi considered, was the organisation of an international competition for an article on the efficacy of passive resistance. However, he simultaneously expressed

doubts regarding the moral permissibility of the organization of the proposed competition. He asked Tolstoy for his own opinion, and if he felt there was nothing wrong in the idea, to suggest names of men he should specially approach to write upon the subject. In conclusion Gandhi asked Tolstoy's permission to translate and to propagate among the Indians in South Africa 'Letter to an Indian', and his permission to delete from the text several words containing criticism of the widespread Indian belief in the re-incarnation of the soul. This belief, affirmed Gandhi, supported the Indian masses in their great struggle against the colonial power.

Before Tolstoy received this letter he had not heard Gandhi's name, nor did he know of the struggle of Indian patriots for their rights in South Africa. He did not know anything about the negotiations of the Transvaal Indians' deputation in London. The Russian press did not report anything about it. The appeal of an Indian from the far-away Transvaal greatly interested him. He at once felt in the author of the letter a person near to him in spirit. On the same day, 24 September 1909, he noted in his diary: "I have received a letter from an Indian in Transvaal."<sup>3a</sup> After a few days Tolstoy wrote to his friend V. G. Chertkov: "The letter of the Transvaal Hindu has touched me very much."<sup>4</sup>

On 26 September (8 October) 1909, he replied to Gandhi's letter in a friendly vein expressing his sincere sympathy for the oppressed Indians and wishing them success in the struggle for their human rights. "I have just received your very interesting letter, which gave me much pleasure. God help our dear brothers and co-workers in the Transvaal! Among us, too, this fight between gentleness and brutality, between humility and love and pride and violence, makes itself ever more strongly felt, especially in one of the sharpest conflicts between religious duty and the State laws—expressed by refusals to render military

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3a. 57.144.

4. 89.144.



service. Such refusals occur more and more frequently.”<sup>5</sup>

Tolstoy approved of Gandhi's intention of propagating among his countrymen 'Letter to an Indian' and reiterated his negative attitude to the myth of the reincarnation of soul, but nevertheless he agreed to let him remove his comments on it from the text of the 'Letter'. "The translation and circulation of my letter in Indian language can only be a matter of pleasure to me," he wrote.<sup>6</sup>

Tolstoy's encouraging reply reached Gandhi just when it became clear to him that his negotiations with the British authorities had failed and, therefore, it made him very glad. On 10 November 1909, Gandhi sent his second letter to Tolstoy, also written from London:

Hotel Westminster Palace,  
4, Victoria Street, London W. C.  
10. XI. 1909.

Dear Sir,

I beg to tender my thanks for your registered letter in connection with the letter addressed to a Hindu ('an Indian'—Translator's note), and with the matters that I dealt with in my letter to you.

Having heard about your failing health I refrained, in order to save you the trouble from sending an acknowledgment, knowing that a written expression of my thanks was superfluous formality; but Mr. Aylmer Maude whom I have now been able to meet reassured me that you are keeping good health indeed and that unfailingly and regularly you attend to your correspondence every morning. It was a very glad-some news to me and it encourages me to write to you further about matters which are, I know, of the greatest importance according to your teaching.

I beg to send you herewith a copy of a book written by a friend—an Englishman—who is at present in

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5. 80.110-111.

6. 80.111.

South Africa<sup>7</sup>, in connection with my life, in so far as it has a bearing on the struggle with which I am so connected and to which my life is dedicated. As I am very anxious to engage your active interest and sympathy I thought that it would not be considered by you as out of the way for me to send you the book.

In my opinion, this struggle of the Indians in the Transvaal is the greatest of modern times, as it has been idealised both as to the goal as also to the methods adopted to reach the goal. I am not aware of a struggle in which the participators are not to derive any personal advantage at the end of it and in which 50 per cent of the persons affected have undergone great suffering and trial for the sake of a principle. It has not been possible for me to advertise the struggle as much as I should like. You command, possibly, the widest public today. If you are satisfied as to the facts you will find set forth in Mr. Doke's book, and if you consider that the conclusions I have arrived at are justified by the facts, may I ask you to use your influence in any manner you think fit to popularise the movement? If it succeeds, it will be not only a triumph of religion, love and truth over irreligion, hatred, and falsehood but it is highly likely to serve as an example to the millions in India and to people in other parts of the world, who may be down-trodden and will certainly go a great way towards breaking up the party of violence, at least in India. If we hold out to the end, as I think we would, I entertain not the slightest doubt as to its ultimate success and your encouragement in the way suggested by you can only

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7. Reference made here is to the English missionary Joseph I. Doke's book, *M. K. Gandhi, an Indian patriot in South Africa*, London, 1909. It appears that at the same time another book had also been received from Gandhi: *A concise statement of the British Indian case in the Transvaal. Presented by the Indian Deputation*, London, 1909. Both the books have been preserved in the Yasnaya Polyana Library.

strengthen us in our resolve.

The negotiations that are going on for a settlement of the question have practically fallen through, and together with my colleagues I return to South Africa this week and invite imprisonment. I may add that my son has happily joined me in the struggle and is now undergoing imprisonment with hard labour for six months. This is his fourth imprisonment in the course of the struggle.

If you would be so good as to reply to this letter, may I ask you to address your reply to me at Johannesburg, S. A. Box 6522.

Hoping that this will find you in good health,  
I remain,

Your obedient servant,

M. K. Gandhi.<sup>8</sup>

It is not known for what reasons (most probably on account of his illness) Tolstoy did not reply to this letter, although he became interested in Doke's book about Gandhi sent with it, as is evidenced by the many notes scribbled in the margin in Tolstoy's hand. The correspondence with Gandhi was renewed after five months, in April 1910, when Gandhi sent Tolstoy, his third letter, along with a copy of his book *Indian Home Rule*.<sup>9</sup>

"You will recollect my having carried on correspondence with you whilst I was temporarily in London. As a humble follower of yours, I send you herewith a booklet which I have written. It is my own translation of a Gujarati writing. Curiously enough, the original writing has been confiscated by the Government of India. I, therefore, hastened the above publication of the translation. I am most anxious not to worry you, but, if your health permits it and if you can find the time to go through the booklet, needless to say I shall value very highly your criticism of

8. Quoted from the article by A. Shifman, "Leo Tolstoy—Friend of India", pp. 99-100.

9. M. K. Gandhi, *Indian Home Rule*. Johannesburg, 1910. The book is kept in the Yasnaya Polyana Library.

the writing. I am sending also a few copies of your *Letter to a Hindoo*, which you authorised me to publish. It has been translated in one of the Indian languages also."

Gandhi asked Tolstoy to read this book and to express his opinion about it which, as he wrote, he was very anxious to have. He also said that the 'Letter to an Indian' had already been published in an English translation and in one of the languages of India. Along with his letter, Gandhi sent Tolstoy several copies of the English translation of the 'Letter to an Indian' with his introduction.

Strange as it may seem, Gandhi's introduction to Tolstoy's famous article had not been translated into Russian till recently. And it certainly has a definite interest. Here are some extracts from it:

"The letter that is printed below is a translation prepared by one of Tolstoy's translators of his letter written in Russian in reply to a letter from the Editor of the *Free Hindustan*.

"The letter, after having passed from hand to hand, at last came into my possession through a friend who asked me, as one much interested in Tolstoy's writings, whether I thought it to be worth publishing. I at once replied in the affirmative and told him I should translate it myself into Gujarati and induce others to translate and publish it into various Indian vernaculars."

After relating his correspondence with Tolstoy regarding the publication of the 'Letter to an Indian', Gandhi continued:

"To me, as a humble follower of that great teacher whom I have long looked upon as one of my guides, it is a matter of honour to be connected with the publication of his letter, such, especially, as the one which is now being given to the world.

"It is a mere statement of fact to say that every Indian, whether he owns up to it or not, has national aspirations. But there are as many opinions as there are Indian nationalists, as to the exact meaning of that aspiration, and more especially as to the methods to be used to attain the end."

Further Gandhi expounded in the spirit of Tolstoy's teaching the question of the methods for attaining the national liberation of India. According to him, there are two methods: one of violent struggle, which he, following the Russian writer, rejected, and the other of passive resistance which he considers as the only right one.

Quoting the important propositions of the 'Letter to an Indian' Gandhi makes common cause with Tolstoy in his appeal to Indians not to participate in the State administration, not to serve in the British army, not to pay taxes, and so on. Otherwise, in his opinion, India will cease to be 'the nursery of great faiths of the world' and it will succumb to the same unfortunate fate of the European countries which yielded to the temptations of Western bourgeois civilization.

In conclusion Gandhi wrote:

"One need not accept all that Tolstoy says—some of his facts are not accurately stated—to realise the central truth of his indictment of the present system which is to understand and act upon the irresistible power of the soul over the body, of love, which is an attribute of the soul, over the brute or body force generated by the stirring up in us of evil passions.

"There is no doubt that there is nothing new in what Tolstoy preaches. But his presentation of the old truth is refreshingly forceful. His logic is unassailable. And above all, he endeavours to practise what he preaches. He preaches to convince. He is sincere and in earnest. He commands attention."<sup>10</sup>

This letter of Gandhi, his foreword to the 'Letter to an Indian', and particularly the book sent by him regarding the colonial regime in India deepened still further Tolstoy's interest in the fate of the Indian people. On 19 April 1910, he noted in his diary that he had received a letter and a book from "the Hindu", which expressed the understanding of the defects of European civilization, even of its worthlessness."

10. It was written from Johannesburg, on 19 November 1909.

11. 58.40.



For several days Tolstoy read with interest Gandhi's *Indian Home Rule* and Doke's book about Gandhi.<sup>12</sup> On 20 April, he noted in his diary about Gandhi's book:

"In the evening I read Gandhi about civilization. Very good."<sup>13</sup> Tolstoy told his intimate friends about these books and his strong impression of them. D. P. Makovitzki noted as follows for those days:

"Gandhi," Tolstoy said, "is the author of the book *Indian Home Rule*. He is the leader of the party which is fighting against England. He had been in jail. Earlier I had received a book from him. This book is extremely interesting. It is a deep condemnation, from the point of view of a religious Hindu, of the entire European civilization."<sup>14</sup>

On 22 April, Tolstoy wrote about it to V. G. Chertkov: "Now and yesterday evening I have been reading a book (one earlier, another later) sent to me with a letter by a Hindu thinker and fighter against English domination, Gandhi, who is fighting by means of Passive Resistance. He is a man very close to us, to me. He has read my writings and has translated into an Indian language my 'Letter to a Hindu', while his book *Indian Home Rule* in an Indian language had been proscribed by the British government. He has asked for my opinion about his book. I would like to write to him at length."<sup>15</sup>

However, Tolstoy could not wholly carry out his desire to answer Gandhi's letter at length. On 25 April 1910, he sent Gandhi a short tentative letter in which he referred approvingly to the books sent to him.

"I have read your book with great interest," he wrote, "for I consider the question there dealt with—passive resistance—to be of the greatest importance not only for

12. See notes of 20 and 21 April 1910 (58.40-41).

13. 58.40.

14. D. P. Makovitzki, *Notes of Yasnaya Polyana*, note of 23 April 1910.

15. 89.85-186.

Indians, but for the whole of mankind."<sup>16</sup>

Tolstoy also spoke favourably about Gandhi's biography written by Doke. The book interested him very much and also clarified many things in Gandhi's letters to him.

"I am not very well at present," he added in conclusion, "and therefore refrain from writing all that is in my heart about your book and about your activity in general, which I value highly. I will, however, do so as soon as I am better."<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile the struggle of the Indians in the Transvaal was becoming more acute. Hundreds of Indian families, who did not want to submit to the colonial administration, were ruined and deprived of their shelter. In order to save the most needy among them from dying of hunger, Gandhi organized an agricultural farm on the land of his architect-friend Herman Kallenbach which he named 'Tolstoy Farm'. The land, along with the agricultural implements of the farm, were placed at the disposal of Indian refugees for settlement and cultivation. Gandhi and Herman Kallenbach informed Tolstoy about all this on 15 August 1910.

Gandhi wrote:

"I am much obliged to you for your encouraging and cordial letter of the 8th May last. I very much value your general approval of my booklet, *Indian Home Rule*. And, if you have the time, I shall look forward to your detailed criticism of the work which you have been so good as to promise in your letter.

"Mr. Kallenbach has written to you about Tolstoy Farm. Mr. Kallenbach and I have been friends for many years. I may state that he has gone through most of the experiences that you have so graphically described in your work *My Confessions*. No writing has so deeply touched Mr. Kallenbach as yours; and, as a spur to further effort in living up to the ideals held before the world by you, he has taken the liberty, after consultation with me, of naming his farm after you.

16. 81.248.

17. *ibid.*

"Of his generous action in giving the use of the farm for passive resisters, the number of *Indian Opinion*<sup>18</sup> I am sending herewith will give you full information.

"I should not have burdened you with these details but for the fact of your taking a personal interest in the passive resistance struggle that is going on in the 'Transvaal.'

About the same time Herman Kallenbach wrote to Tolstoy:

"Without asking your permission, I have named my farm—'Tolstoy Farm'. I have read many of your works and your teaching has made a deep impression on me.

"M. K. Gandhi, the leader of the Indian colony in South Africa, whom I have the honour to consider my friend, lives with me. I have put my farm which has about 1100 acres of land at his disposal for the needs of the passive resisters and their families.

"Having made use of your name, I feel bound to inform you about it and I can add my justification, that I shall apply all my efforts in order to live in agreement with the ideals which you bring into the world so fearlessly."

These letters as well as the number of *Indian Opinion* sent by Gandhi gave great pleasure to Tolstoy. "Pleasant news from Transvaal about the colony of the passive resisters," he noted in his diary of 6 September 1910<sup>19</sup> and, on the same day, dictated to D. P. Makovitzki his reply to Gandhi, which he sent to V. G. Chertkov in London next day for translation and dispatch. This was Tolstoy's last letter to Gandhi.

In this letter, Tolstoy again put forward his arguments in favour of the 'teaching of love', which he considered as the main law of life. All the injustices and calamities of

18. The journal *Indian Opinion* was founded by Gandhi in 1904 in Natal (South Africa) and was published in English and in three Indian languages. The issue of *Indian Opinion* (Vol. VIII, No. 82) sent by Gandhi is kept in the Yasnaya Polyana Library. A photo of the first inhabitants of Tolstoy's farm is also given in it.

19. 58.100,

mankind have arisen because men repudiated the law of love and replaced it with the law of violence. "The whole of civilization, outwardly so splendid, has grown up on this strange and flagrant — partly intentional but chiefly unconscious — misunderstanding and contradiction."<sup>20</sup> The disastrous consequences of this were clearly visible in all the countries of the world, but it was particularly apparent among the so-called Christian peoples, i.e., in Europe and in America, where the contradictions between the religious consciousness of the simple people who no longer reconciled themselves to violence, and the employment of force based on violence by ruling powers had reached unseen proportions.

This contradiction had reached the utmost limit. "At present the question poses itself evidently in the following manner: either it must be admitted that we do not recognise any discipline, religious or moral, and that we are guided in the organisation of life only by the law of force, or that all the taxes that we exact by force, the judicial and police organisations and above all the army must be abolished."<sup>21</sup>

The insolubility of this contradiction in conditions of the dominating regime is proved by "the growing criminality, unemployment and absurd luxuries of the rich, augmented without limit, and the awful misery of the poor, the terribly increased number of suicides".<sup>22</sup> All this was the direct consequence of the fact that the relations between people were based on violence and oppression, on exploitation of man by man. This was the fruit of the perversion of the feelings of love, friendship and brotherhood which are inherent in men.

Nevertheless, Tolstoy affirmed, the sense of the injustice of the existing system of life was growing in the whole world and manifested itself in a variety of forms of struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors. One of

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20. 82.138.

21. 82.138-139.

22. 82.139.

these forms was the struggle of the Transvaal Indians against the colonial regime. Tolstoy considered this form of struggle important on principle, reasonable and fruitful, because for the first time in history it demonstrated a practical proof of popular protest and of resistance 'without violence'.

In conclusion, Tolstoy touched the most important of the questions which agitated him in his last years—that of aggressive wars and colonial exploitation. He stressed the scandalous contradiction between the Christian doctrine of mercy which rests at the basis of the modern bourgeois civilization and which is verbally professed by the rulers of the modern world, and 'the simultaneous recognition of the necessity of armies and armaments for slaughter on an ever-increasing scale'.

"All governments are aware of this contradiction, your British as much as our Russian, and therefore, its recognition will be more energetically opposed by the governments than any other activity inimical to the State, as we in Russia have experienced and as is shown by the articles in your magazine. The governments know from what direction the greatest danger threatens them, and are on guard with watchful eyes not merely to preserve their interests but actually to fight for their very existence."<sup>23</sup>

Owing to a number of reasons, Tolstoy's letter reached Gandhi belatedly. At that time the Russian writer was already on his death-bed. With it the correspondence between the two great men came to an end. More than once Gandhi republished Tolstoy's letters in his journal, noting with gratitude that the Russian writer had rendered the Indians moral support in their struggle for independence.

Till the end of his life Gandhi considered himself a disciple and follower of the Russian sage. Already in his early talks with his biographer Joseph Doke, Gandhi had stressed the fact that Tolstoy had influenced his thought. Later on in his booklet *Hind Swaraj*, he recommended to



the youth to read, among other books, the following of Tolstoy: *What is Art?*, *What then must We do?* and *The Kingdom of God is within You*. In 1921 when a correspondent asked him, "What are your relations with Count Tolstoy?" Gandhi replied in his journal *Young India*: "They are of a devoted admirer who owes him much in his life."

Gandhi showed a deep interest in Tolstoy's views even after the latter's death. He corresponded with some of his British admirers, in particular with the Scottish writer, Isobel Mayo, with whom Tolstoy had put him in touch through V. G. Chertkov.

Chertkov wrote to Gandhi on 11 September 1910.

"Since it seems to me that it is extremely desirable that your movement should become as widely known as possible in England, I am writing to a great friend of mine, and also a friend of Tolstoy's, Mrs. Mayo, in Glasgow, suggesting her to correspond with you. She has great literary talent and is known in England as a writer. You should send her all your publications, which would serve as material for her article about your movement, the publication of which in England would attract attention towards your work and cause. Mrs. Mayo, probably will write to you herself."<sup>24</sup>

Gandhi wrote to Mrs. Mayo who, encouraged by Tolstoy, did much to popularise Gandhi's movement in England. Correspondence between Gandhi and Mrs. Mayo continued. One of the topics of this correspondence was the question of preserving the manuscripts left by Tolstoy.

In 1913 a dispute arose between Tolstoy's wife and his youngest daughter on the question of his manuscripts, now kept in the Historical Museum in Moscow. People having the same views as Tolstoy were on the side of his daughter, both in Russia and abroad. They prepared an appeal to Sofia Andreyevna on which they were collecting signatures from outstanding personalities in order to per-

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24. Quoted from *Literary Inheritance*, Nos. 37-38, p. 349.

suade her to hand over the manuscript collection to her daughter. Gandhi was approached with the request to sign this letter by Isobel Mayo. But Gandhi considered this as a moral pressure on the writer's wife and showed great tact and refused to sign the address sent to him. Instead he himself wrote a letter to Sofia Tolstoy and stated his view regarding this complicated problem.

Sofia Andreyevna, in her reply, explained to Gandhi her position. But, as Isobel Mayo informed A. D. Zirnis in charge of Chertkov's publishing house on 2 April 1913, Sofia Andreyevna's letter did not make a good impression on Gandhi.

Sixteen years later Gandhi renewed his correspondence with Tolstoy's followers, this time with Chertkov. The main subject of the correspondence was the attitude to war. In 1929, after the appearance in the journal *Young India* of Gandhi's well-known article "My Attitude to War", Chertkov, guided by Tolstoy's teachings, reproached Gandhi in two long letters for his inconsistency and his retreat from the principles of pacifism and non-violence.

In his replies and in his articles, Gandhi explained his stand and assured Tolstoy's Russian friends that he was and would remain a convinced opponent of war.

"You may be convinced," he wrote on 14 July 1929 to Chertkov, "that I do not intend to take part in an armed conflict, which could arise anywhere, including my own country."<sup>25</sup>

In another letter to Chertkov, dated 21 July 1929, Gandhi again assured him: "I consider that any war, under whatever pretext it is waged, is criminal."<sup>26</sup>

In these letters Gandhi reiterated his deep respect for the memory of the great Russian writer.

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25 & 26. The letters have not been published. They are kept in Tolstoy's Archives.

## The Last Years

TOLSTOY maintained links with India and a concern for her people till the last days of his life. With growing interest he read the letters and the journals from India which were regularly received in Yasnaya Polyana, and followed the events in the newspapers. His new correspondents were mainly simple people. Their letters were reactions to the 'Letter to an Indian' which, thanks to Gandhij, had been widely publicised and had reached the people. Many Indians felt in this epistolary article Tolstoy's sincere concern for their country and were eager to share with him their ideas about life and their difficulties. Some meant to persuade him to write again against the colonial regime in India and, therefore, communicated new facts to him.

Here is one such letter sent in September 1909 by a young lawyer from Moradabad, Bishen Narain:

"India," he wrote, "is comparable to Russia because two-thirds of its population are engaged in agriculture and live mainly in villages. Indian peasants are ignorant, oppressed, fearful, illiterate and, therefore, they humbly obey those in power. The land they till is considered to be the property of the British Government which collects taxes from the land-owners, and the latter collect them from the small leaseholders and farmers. The land-owners, who are the descendants of the old Indian aristocracy, are mainly money-lenders who cringe before the British officials. They lack dignity and have very little love for freedom and independence.

"The high Government officials are chiefly Englishmen while the lower employees, who are about ten times more numerous, are Indians knowing the English language. More than one-fourth of the State income is derived from

land revenue, which increases every year. . . The people obediently give away their last coin in payment of the taxes.

"Nearly half of State income is spent on the army (one third of it consists of Englishmen and two thirds Indians) and the remainder is spent for the maintenance of the colonial machinery. Expenses for the army are growing every year."

Describing further the miserable fate of the Indian peasants who were constantly starving, Bishen Narain wrote:

"The percentage of mortality in India is very high due to epidemics of plague, cholera, smallpox, malaria, and other diseases. Mortality in India is almost twice as high as in England. Particularly high is child-mortality which indicates the low resistance of the population. During the last twenty years the population in India has almost remained static."

He complained bitterly that in India there were five million beggars who lived on alms and an innumerable number of people born under the open sky who during their entire life did not have a roof over their heads. He also wrote about the parasitism of the Brahmin-priests, about the omnipotence of the Britishers who occupied key positions in the economy of the country, about the cruel repressions by the authorities of the participants in the national liberation movement.

Describing the struggle of the Indian people for their rights, Bishen Narain noted that the Indian peasant, owing to his downtrodden state, ignorance and the burden of taxation, participated little in the national movement. "The unique source of anxiety for the Government were the Indians who had received English education. It is they who every year organized meetings, conferences and congresses, speaking about political rights, social reforms, about the reorganization of industry, about reduction of military expenditure, free education, and so on, in all the provinces.

"They inspired the people, they inflamed the passions in the country, instigating the masses to assert their demands."

In conclusion Bishen Narain said that the entire country was seized by unrest and according to him big changes were taking place in India. The masses were waking up, they were beginning to move. "In what direction will they go? Towards what aim? These are questions whose answers are hidden in the obscurity of the future."<sup>1</sup>

Besides such letters, there were others in which the writers, without inquiring about anything or asking for anything from the Russian writer, simply expressed their regard for him. Such letters came every year for the birthday, many of them for his last birthday—28 August (9 September) 1910. Here is one of them, from an Indian student, Khushal I. Shah:

"On this auspicious day, on your birthday, you will of course receive a large number of letters of congratulation and therefore even when I am writing these lines I am not sure whether they will be honoured by your attention or not. But believe me, deeply respected Sir, that among this multitude of people congratulating you few will do it as sincerely as your obedient servant.

"Far far away in a town buried in the depth of India, I have read some of your works (only a few) and I admire your genius. . . Retaining a grateful memory of the many instructive thoughts derived from your works, I send you my most sincere congratulations. I beg you to believe that in far-away India many whole-heartedly will pray to God to give you still many more birthdays, dear teacher and apostle of the simple life."<sup>2</sup>

Of course such letters were pleasant and heart-warming to Tolstoy. Not only the tone of the letters which was sincere and hearty, but also their contents made him happy. While from some Western countries often came empty,

1. Published here for the first time. The English original is kept in Tolstoy's Archives.

2. Published here for the first time. The English original is kept in the Yasnaya Polyana Library.



insipid letters, motivated solely by the desire for an autograph or a photograph of the famous writer, letters from the East, particularly India, showed genuine concern of their authors with great spiritual problems. Tolstoy often noted this difference and showed his preference for correspondents from the East.

Valuing highly the culture of the Indian people, Tolstoy wished to make the Russians acquainted with the history of India, its art and philosophy. On 20 March 1909, he discussed with his collaborators the plan for the publication of the "Posrednik" on this subject and on the same day he wrote down in his diary: "We have decided to publish: (i) A survey of India, its history and present situation; (ii) the legend of Krishna and (iii) the sayings of Krishna. Later on we could include (iv) the sayings of the new Ramakrishna and Vivekananda."<sup>3</sup> Some of these books and booklets were prepared and published by "Posrednik".

Tolstoy's activity in popularizing Indian culture was well known both in Russia and abroad. People desirous of taking part in this work often went to Tolstoy and always received his help and support. In May 1909, L. B. Khavkina Hamburger, a teacher and librarian, sent Tolstoy her popular essay "India" (1907) and asked him to express his opinion about it. On 9 July, Tolstoy replied to her: "I liked your book about India very much. I think that this kind of book is very useful. And therefore I wish you success in the work undertaken by you."<sup>4</sup> This benevolent comment encouraged the lady, and she published new popular works about Indian history.

During the same spring, the well-known Russian scholar of Indian philosophy, N. O. Einhorn, visited Tolstoy in Yasnaya Polyana. Having learnt that Tolstoy was trying to have the great ancient Indian epics translated and published in Russia, Einhorn suggested the books which, in his opinion, could be translated and published in a popular edition. Tolstoy carefully went through the list recom-

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3. 57.40.

4. 80.12.

mended and on 2 April 1909, replied to Einhorn: "I was very glad to receive your letter. . . The subject which interests you has been interesting me for a long time and particularly so now."

Having told him of his intention to publish for the people 'cheap editions' about the wise men of the east, Tolstoy wrote:

"Recently many Indian writers have appeared who have been acquainting Europe with the wisdom of Hindus. I receive two Indian journals and just yesterday I received a letter from a young Hindu<sup>5</sup> who sent me his new publication. . ."

In conclusion Tolstoy approved Einhorn's desire to participate in the publication of books about India for the Russian public.

Tolstoy was particularly concerned in those years with acquainting Russian children with India. He considered that Indian poetry and wisdom would not only be interesting but also useful for Russian children. On 17 May 1909, as an experiment, he talked about India to the peasant children in Yasnaya Polyana, but to his grief they did not listen attentively. Two days later, he wrote down in his diary: "I have been reading about India. The children need the history."<sup>6</sup> As already mentioned, in 1905, he had written an essay on Buddha for children which, in 1908, he rewrote completely for the new edition of the children's *Book for Reading*. He was also now thinking about writing a children's book on the history of India.

Tolstoy considered that in order to acquaint the Russian public with Indian culture it was necessary not only to publish books, but to organize public lectures, and he did much in that direction. Already, in August 1903, he

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5. This refers to an Indian journalist Bharati Marga Subha, who, in 1909, founded in Bangalore (India) the journal *Gnanodaya* (See his letter to Tolstoy, of 20 March 1909, kept in the Tolstoy's Archives.

6. 79.142-143.

7. 56.195.

had written to V. V. Stasov and A. S. Suvorin at Petersburg asking them to help a certain Indian, Narain Krishan, who wanted to give lectures about India.

At the beginning of March 1909, the well-known Russian traveller, A. A. Korsini, who had been in India and taken many photographs which she had brought with her, came to Yasnaya Polyana. Tolstoy talked with her for a long time, questioned her about the life and customs of the Indians and also about the attitude of the Britishers towards them. Korsini told him that the British officials treated the Indians brutally and even went so far as to whip them with a lash. A rich Britisher would never sit near an Indian in a train or in a restaurant as this was considered degrading.

Tolstoy was greatly grieved by what he heard. At the same time he was pleased with the information about the achievements of the talented Indians in the sphere of literature, art and handicrafts. In the evening, Tolstoy invited the peasants of Yasnaya Polyana, who were living nearby, to a lecture by Korsini, and after the lecture he saw with them the slides about India which were shown through the 'magic lantern'. "A very interesting, an extremely interesting people," he said about the Indians after the lecture.<sup>8</sup>

About Korsini's lecture Tolstoy remarked: "How good this lecture would have been, if only it were better arranged, the material selected properly and illustrated by textual notes."

Following Tolstoy's advice, Korsini wrote down her lectures and delivered them in Moscow, Petersburg and other towns of Russia, and then prepared them for publication as a separate book. Tolstoy sent her a letter of approval, which she used as a foreword to the book.

In this way Tolstoy encouraged and supported any one who sincerely wanted to participate in the desirable task of strengthening the friendship between the peoples of Russia and India. He often spoke about India with his inti-

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8. D. P. Makovitzki, *Notes on Yasnaya Polyana*, note dated 2 March 1909.

mate friends. In the memoirs of those who were near to Tolstoy there are interesting remarks on this subject. For instance, Makovitzki wrote down the following conversation between Tolstoy and his wife Sofia Andreyevna in June 1908:

TOLSTOY: For several days I have been writing a letter to an Indian. They, the Indians, have absorbed European ideas, the press, the desire for their own parliament. It is a pity. Why must it be that all they learn is connected with European liberalism, and that only these ideals are assimilated by them?

SOFIA ANDREYEVNA: Wherever people adhere to them in Western Europe, there they have regulated their lives.

TOLSTOY (*ironically*): They have very nicely *regulated* their life! In England when an execution takes place, it is carried out in a tower with the greatest perfection. Then a flag is hoisted by which the public knows that the execution has been completed and they applaud.<sup>9</sup>

More than once Tolstoy compared the peaceful patriarchal life of the Indians to the European bourgeois reality. On 29 April 1910, when Tolstoy told his intimate friends about an interesting book on science in India which he had received, somebody asked him:

"Really, does science develop in India?"

"Thank God, it does not," laughed Leo Nikolaevich.

"But in our country," he added ironically, "it goes on developing: There are many professors..."<sup>10</sup>

Tolstoy talked very willingly with people who had been to India. On the 19 July, he wrote to Sofia Andreyevna from the village Kochety, where he was on a visit to his daughter, that a certain Vladimir Nikolaevich Matveev, 'who had been to India and Persia' had visited him. He particularly liked Matveev's stories about the industry of

9. D. P. Makovitzki, *Notes on Yasnaya Polyana*, entry dated 20 June 1908.

10. A. B. Goldenweizer, *Near Tolstoy*, Vol. II, p. 185.

Indian peasants.

That same summer, Tolstoy met and talked with Ladyzhenski who owned a neighbouring estate and who had lived many years in the countries of the Far East, and with Ladyzhenski's acquaintance, the Russian Consul in Bombay. Tolstoy eagerly asked them questions about India and argued much with Ladyzhenski about the 'psychical' teaching of the Yogis.

"It seems to me that this is not necessary, that it is confused, not clear, and deals with an unnecessary and inaccessible sphere of man," he remarked, and when Ladyzhenski tried to defend this teaching, he replied:

"No, psychical force is of no use: it is the same as theosophy."

On the other hand Tolstoy listened with interest to all that his guests told him about agriculture in India, about the methods of working the soil, about harvests on the banks of Ganges, about the morals and customs of Indian peasants. Such stories convinced him every time that the simple people throughout the world are near to one another and have the same aspirations and ideals.

Tolstoy in these years often expressed regret that the people of India, who were suffering under the colonial rule, did not repulse their oppressors. "If," he wrote in his article 'About the significance of the Russian Revolution', "two hundred million Indians did not obey the authorities when ordered to participate in violence, which is always connected with killing, if they did not enlist as soldiers, did not pay the taxes used for armed repression, were not attracted by advantages offered to them by the oppressors and which by right belonged to them, if they did not obey the English laws introduced among them, then not only the fifty thousand Englishmen, but all the Englishmen taken together would not be able to enslave India, even if the Indians were not 200 millions, but one thousand."<sup>12</sup>

In July 1906, he once again expressed the same idea.

11. *ibid.*, p. 187.

12. 36.339.



"Enslavement," we read in his notebook, "is much more difficult when there is disobedience than when there is obedience... India... Would it have been possible for fifty thousand Englishmen to conquer twenty crores if these two hundred millions had not themselves put their necks under the yoke?" Tolstoy was never tired of criticising and condemning the British rulers who enslaved this country. "What is going on there?" he wrote in indignation. "How the Englishmen swindle! Before Englishmen comprised one-tenth of the army, now one-third. . . The land belonged to the Indian princelings, and now to the English Government. Not a single Indian owns land: he has to pay for everything to the English."<sup>13</sup>

In January 1909 after reading an article in the journal *Novoe Vremya* about the colonial policy of England, Tolstoy noted again:

"I do not know of another example in history where such an immense people as the Indians have been enslaved by a handful of alien people. Traders manipulate their little affairs and subdue the people, then they set up an army in order to consolidate the enslavement."<sup>14</sup>

As already mentioned, in his diaries of 1906, Tolstoy had stressed the moral superiority of the Indians over their enslavers: "The Indians have been conquered by the English, but they are freer than the English: They can live without the English, but the English cannot live without them."<sup>15</sup> During the last months of his life, he often expressed his conviction that the day of the liberation of the Indians was already near. He predicted a great future for India and her people.

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13. D. P. Makovitzki, *Notes on Yasnaya Polyana*, entry dated 20 October 1908.

14. *ibid.*, 10 January 1909.

15. 55.234.

## Tolstoy's Publications in India

THE acquaintance of Indians with Russian literature and in particular with Tolstoy's works began in the seventies of the 19th century. Since then Russian classical works were widely published in England and from there brought to India, where they became known to the Indian intelligentsia. The general reader came to know Tolstoy only in the first decade of the 20th century, when interest in Russia and its culture considerably increased as a result of the revolution of 1905. In those years a number of Tolstoy's works in English were published in India and articles appeared about him. A little later, Gandhi publicised Tolstoy's 'Letter to an Indian'.

On Tolstoy's death, the leading Indian newspapers and journals published reports from England and Russia, printed his portraits, as well as select sayings and extracts from his works. Some published reports of Tolstoy's funeral and the widespread public grief particularly of students in Russia. The well-known Bengali monthly magazine *Prabashi*, edited by Ramananda Chatterjee was noteworthy for the interesting articles it published about the life, work and philosophy of Tolstoy. In 1913, it published a translation of *The Live Corpse*, done by poet Satindranath Das.<sup>1</sup>

In the next decade Tolstoy's works continued to be published in India, mostly in English, because at that time English was the language of the intelligentsia, the development of literature in Indian languages having been discouraged under the colonial regime. But gradually works

1. See the article by T. Haldar, "Ties between Russian and Bengali literature", *Problemy Vostakovedenya*, 1959, No. 1, p. 137.

of Russian literature began to be published in Hindi, Bengali and Urdu.

Tolstoy's folk stories and fairy tales were translated into Indian languages before his other works and published in newspapers and journals. These were mostly anonymous translations and adaptations, often very far from the original and with an emphasis on the moral of those tales. The strongly didactic character of these tales gave rise to the legend that some of them were from Gandhi's pen.<sup>2</sup> However, there is no documentary evidence to support this statement.

The best adaptations of Tolstoy's works were by the well-known Indian writer Prem Chand. He translated and adapted twenty-one stories of Tolstoy and published them in a collection under the title of *Tolstoy's Stories* from Calcutta, in 1924.<sup>3</sup> It included "God sees the truth but waits", "The captive in the Caucasus", "The chase is worse than the confinement", "What men live by", "If you neglect the fire you don't put it out", "Two old men", "Where love is, God is", "The Tale about John the fool and his two brothers", "The good master," "Little girls are cleverer than old men", "Ilyas". "How the Devil redeemed a piece of bread", "How much land does a man need?", "The grain as big as a hen's egg", "Godson", "Repentant sinner", "The Coffee-House of Surat", "It costs much", "The Assyrian King Esarhaddon", "Toil, death and disease" and "Three questions"—almost all folk stories written by Tolstoy in the eighties and nineties.

Since Prem Chand intended his publications for peasant readers, he followed, without realising it, the same principles as Tolstoy did in rewriting the Indian epics. This is evident, in particular, by the new titles which he gave to the stories written by Tolstoy. The titles, which were

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2. This opinion is shared also by some Soviet research workers. For instance see the article: O. Kolomeitzev, 'Leo Tolstoy in India', *Zvezda Vostoka*, 1950, No. 11.
  3. See review of this translation: A. P. Barannikov, "Indian Philology". *Literaturovedenie*, Moscow, 1959, pp. 258-270.

Russian proverbs and which, therefore, Indians could not understand, were changed (instead of "God sees the truth but does not speak out at once", he used "Mercy"; instead of "If you neglect the fire, you don't put it out", he used "The house is set on fire by one spark"; instead of "The chase is worse than the confinement", he used "The hunting of the bear"). All the Russian names, whether of people or places were replaced by Indian ones. For instance, "John the fool" was changed to "Sumant the fool" and "The captive in the Caucasus" to "The Captive Rajput". Finally some stories received their titles on the basis of their moral or the theme. Thus Ilyas, a Bashkir name, was replaced by a moralizing title in Tolstoy's own spirit: "Happiness in Privation".

The techniques used by Prem Chand in translating and adapting Tolstoy's works deserve a special study. As pointed out by Academician A. P. Barannikov, Prem Chand did not translate the Russian text literally but he retold it in his own way, sometimes creating new stories, and bringing them to the level of perception of the Indian reader. Thus in his adaptations of the Russian stories the characters are no longer Russian, but Indian: peasants live in Indian villages, wear Indian clothes, eat Indian food, till the earth not with horses as in Russia, but with bullocks. In their dreams they do not see Russian angels, but Indian Brahmins, who preach not the Gospel, but the tenets of Hinduism. The action of the stories is transferred to an Indian situation and takes place in surroundings familiar to the readers.

Barannikov analysed Prem Chand's story "God is in love" which is the adaptation of Tolstoy's well-known story "Where love is, God is". The subject, the fable and the author's conclusion have been preserved, but the action has been transferred to a tradesman's family from a shoemaker's, because in Indian conception, the appearance of an angel in a shoemaker's home, as described in Tolstoy, is impossible, a shoemaker being of low birth. Many of the details of the story have been similarly altered. For instance, Tolstoy's shoemaker Andreich worked "well, supplied good

material, did not charge in excess and kept his word"; Prem Chand's tradesman Murat "never cheated in weighing even by one tola and never sold purified ghee adulterated with vegetable oil. If the merchandise was not good, he told the purchaser so but never cheated." Tolstoy's Andreich read the Gospel and waited for Christ, Prem Chand's Murat read the Gita and the Ramayana and waited for Lord Krishna.

Similarly the names and details in Tolstoy's other stories have been changed. Brought nearer to the comprehension of the Indian reader, they did not lose either the richness of their content or their artistic merit. Tolstoy's idea and the metaphorical quality of his work were maintained almost entirely and in every place.

Along with adaptations of Tolstoy's stories in the twenties, thirties and forties, as we have already mentioned, translations of his works also appeared which were done mostly from English editions. But the translations were few and their quality cannot be considered satisfactory.

Indian literary criticism on the subject of Tolstoy was mainly concerned with his views on non-resistance and here non-resistance was chiefly examined in relation to Gandhi and his religio-moral philosophy. Much less was written about his artistic works and what was written was not of much worth.

Academician Barannikov considers that the best Indian works of that period were the series "Literary Talks" by Shahid Suhrawardi, published in the journal *Urdu*, in 1925-26. The Indian scholar highly appreciated Tolstoy's works and his role in world literature. Pushkin, Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, according to him, stand "at the head of the great galaxy of writers thanks to whom at the present time Russian literature is considered to be the most powerful and the most pure of all literatures."<sup>4</sup>

In the same journal, in 1935, appeared another import-

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4. Quoted from A. P. Barannikov's article "Indians about Russian Literature", *Indian Philology, Literaturovedenie*, p. 127.



ant work about Tolstoy, an article by Prof. Mohammed Mujeeb, in which the creative development of the artist is analyzed in relation to Russian history of the post-revolutionary period.

In these years the translations of the well-known works of Romain Rolland and Zweig on Tolstoy, P.I. Biryukov's and A. Maude's biographical works, A.M. Gorky's recollections and other similar publications appeared in India. But in India itself no serious work of literary criticism on Tolstoy, particularly about his artistic works, has yet appeared.

With the creation of the Indian Republic and the strengthening of friendly relations between USSR and India translations from Russian literature and particularly of Tolstoy have begun to be published in greater number since the fifties. Now many of Tolstoy's works are available in nearly all the languages of the country in popular editions. Unfortunately we do not have an exhaustive bibliography on this question, but the data<sup>5</sup> which reached us is fairly eloquent.

In Hindi, the novel *War and Peace* was published three times, *Anna Karenina* four times. Tolstoy's stories both in independent editions and in collections were published ten times. Tolstoy's works for children, collections of his publicist writings and the writer's diaries were published in mass editions.

In Gujarati were published: *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina*, *Resurrection*, *the Power of Darkness*, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, *Master and Man*, *Family Happiness*.

Into Bengali were translated: *War and Peace* (the first two volumes), *Anna Karenina* (three editions), *Resurrection* (three editions), the early trilogy, *The Tales of Sevastapol*, *The Cossacks*, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (two editions), *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *Hadji Murad*, and eleven collections of stories.

5. The data used is of the All Union Lenin Library, State Library of Foreign Literature and the Library of the State Museum of Tolstoy.

In Malayalam were published *War and Peace* (twice), *Anna Karenina*, *Resurrection*, *The Power of Darkness* (twice), *Family Happiness* (twice), *The Cossacks*, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, *The Kreutzer Sonata* and four collections of stories and tales.

In Tamil an even greater number of works were published. The novel *War and Peace* was published from Madras in five editions, *Anna Karenina* twice, *Resurrection*, four times. In separate editions were published the earlier trilogy, *Family Happiness*, *The Power of Darkness*. Collections of Tolstoy's stories were published four times.

In Telugu all the novels of Tolstoy were published, *Resurrection* (twice), and also the plays *The Power of Darkness*, *The Fruits of Enlightenment*, *The Live Corpse*, the story *The Cossacks*, *Family Happiness*, *The Kreutzer Sonata* and others.

A smaller number of books by the Russian writer were published in Urdu, Marathi, Panjabi and Kannada.

These apart, the number of magazine articles and books about Tolstoy that continue to be published and the literary evenings organized under the auspices of universities and literary and cultural societies bear ample witness that Tolstoy's name enjoys general respect in India.

The humanistic and artistic legacy of the Russian writer has always been held in esteem by all the great scholars and artists of India. Rabindranath Tagore considered Tolstoy 'as the teacher of mankind' and urged people to listen to his voice. Quoting Tolstoy's thoughts about education for the people in his article on "Reform of Education", Tagore regretted that "at the present time the voice of the only man in the world, of the only contemporary teacher of mankind, was this voice in the wilderness".<sup>6</sup> During his visit to Moscow in 1930, Tagore witnessed at the Moscow Artistic Academic Theatre the staging of Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection*, and in his *Letters from Russia* he commented<sup>7</sup>

6. Rabindranath Tagore, Works in eight volumes, Vol. VIII, p. 329.

7. *ibid.*, p. 204.

on it with much praise.

Prem Chand had great respect for the Russian writer. In the introduction to his translations of Tolstoy's folk stories, he wrote: "Count Tolstoy, as it is known, has written a lot and nowadays there is in Europe no language into which his works have not been translated, but in his maturity, when his social and religious views had been completely established, among his works, he liked these stories best. *Anna Karenina*, *Tales of Sevastapol* and other works fell in his estimation. He believed that the main value of literature is to arouse universal love and understanding. Both its language and ideas should be so simple that its understanding should represent no difficulty even to a simple peasant. Some stories reach such heights that one feels they could have been taken from the *Upanishads*. The language is so lucid and lively that even children will find pleasure in reading them."<sup>8</sup> We find similar appreciation of Tolstoy in Prem Chand's articles published in journals *Hans*, *Jagaran* and others.

Modern progressive Indian writers like Krishan Chandar, Ali Sardar Jafri, Ahmad Nədim Kazmi, Sajjad Zahir, Shivdan Singha Chauhan, Mulk Raj Anand and others highly admire Tolstoy's work. India's interest in Russian literature and particularly in Tolstoy's works was expressed by the representatives of India in their address to the Third International Congress of Writers in Moscow in 1959. Thakazi Shivashankara Pillai, the novelist from Kerala, said from the rostrum of the Congress:

"A few days ago I visited Yasnaya Polyana, I paid my homage to the sacred place and the memory of it will always remain in my heart. It is difficult for me to convey to you the feeling of deep pleasure which overpowered me when we were driving to the abode of the man who has left us such unforgettable creations. The lone bird that was singing somewhere in the depth of the forest reminded me of the grieving *Anna Karenina*, even the breeze ruffling us

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8. Quoted from A. P. Barannikov's review of the translation of Tolstoy's stories, *Indian Philology*, p. 261.

was, it seemed, full of images which rose in front of us, as Indian, brought up in the traditions of Indian philosophy, could not help thinking that the souls of the people created by Tolstoy's genius, had been reincarnated in these birds. Writers of my generation were formed under the influence of the great French writers—Voltaire, Balzac, Hugo, Maupassant. Their works greatly influenced by the classical works of Russian literature: Gogol, Dostoyevsky, Turgenyev, Tolstoy, Gorky.”<sup>9</sup>

Another delegate from India, the Hindi writer Banarasi Das Chaturvedi, spoke at the Congress about his admiration for Russian literature and the great genius of Tolstoy. As a sign of friendship between Indian and Soviet writers he gave as a present to the Museum of Yasnaya Polyana the photostats of Gandhi's and Rolland's letters, and also Tolstoy's works in Hindi.

His admiration of Tolstoy's genius was expressed during his visit to the USSR by the late President of the Indian Republic, Dr. Rajendra Prasad. On 28 June 1960, while in Moscow, the then Head of the Indian state visited and attentively looked round the museum of the great writer and wrote in the Visitor's Book as follows:

“I am extremely pleased that I have been so lucky as to make a pilgrimage to the country seat of the late great Tolstoy and to see objects which belonged to him. The excellent way in which all these objects are preserved arouses my admiration and this can best inspire all those who come here. This visit was particularly interesting for me because I have read much about Tolstoy and have heard much about him from Mahatma Gandhi. This is why I wanted very much to come here. My desire has been fulfilled at last, and I have had the opportunity to visit every thing thanks to the kindness shown to me by the Director of the Museum to whom I am very grateful.”<sup>10</sup>

9. “Literaturnaya Gazeta”, 2 June 1959.

10. From the Visitor's book of the Museum of the country seat of Tolstoy in Moscow.



The President of India also spoke at the meeting dedicated to Indo-Soviet friendship, which took place on 30 June 1960 in the big Kremlin Palace, of the friendly ties between Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi. "It is pleasant to remember," he said "that when formulating his philosophy and planning his activity Gandhi felt the great influence of a kindred spirit in Russia, of the spirit of Leo Tolstoy, who also deeply grieved over the inequality existing as a result of racial and political domination in various regions of the world."<sup>11</sup> The President mentioned this fact as a significant episode in the history of Russo-Indian cultural relationships.

Love and respect for Tolstoy manifested itself with special fervour in India on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Tolstoy's death in November 1960. Under the Chairmanship of Banarasidas Chaturvedi, the Anniversary Committee organized a Tolstoy Week marked by widespread participation of the public which was a great success. Inaugurating the week at a large solemn function in Delhi on 21 November, Jawaharlal Nehru referred to Tolstoy as "this eternal pilgrim, bowing his head to none, marching forward fearlessly in quest of the great aim he had in his mind". Nehru went on to say: "I may not agree with something he says in his books, some ideas, some theory; it does not much matter whether I agree or not. The fact is that when I think of him, I think of something mighty, great, and I bow down before him." Hailing Tolstoy as "one of the great pilgrims of all ages", he said: "We should think of him as such and thinking of him as that pilgrim in search of truth, I think something, a very little bit of his greatness may for a moment descend upon us also".

Speaking of the difficulties and dangers facing modern mankind, Nehru paid a tribute to the depth of thought and insight of the great Russian artist, whose humanism continues till now to play a great role in the struggle for peace and friendship among the peoples. "We live," he said, "in difficult times, with all kinds of shadows and dangers and

11. *Pravda*, 1 July 1960.



also with all kinds of promises for the future, and may be the two always go together and if there is only promise of the good things, they themselves might cease to have value. It is only when they are achieved by a dangerous journey, by all kinds of risks being faced that tortured humanity has advanced, and in spite of all the great progress that humanity has made and is making, that tortured soul of humanity has not rid itself of that pain and perhaps it is good that it has not done so. And when it does so completely, it won't remain humanity as we know it, we do not know what it will be then. Anyhow, there is no fear of this age suddenly putting an end to all troubles and problems. Even as we succeed in solving some, others arise and, therefore, the joy of life is in struggling with those problems and trying to overcome them, trying to go beyond reach, to rise, to mount the hills and the mountains ever higher and even if we are thrown down sometimes in the valley, to mount again to a higher summit. And so here we find a man, who through very difficult journeys had attained very high summits, and even to look up to him and to think of him, ennobles us to some extent and strengthens us in our own journey."

Jawaharlal Nehru spoke warmly about Tolstoy also in the telegram he sent at that time to Moscow to the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.

"Leo Tolstoy belongs to the number of those European writers whose name and works are perhaps in India the best known. This can be explained not only by the great merit of Tolstoy's works, but also by the spiritual likeness between him and our leader Mahatma Gandhi, who greatly admired Tolstoy and was under his influence in the period of the formation of his personality.

"Therefore I am happy to pay just tribute to this great Russian writer and to express respect to his memory in connection with the 50th anniversary of his death. He belongs to the number of the very few chosen writers of the world whose memory is imperishable and, although already half a century has passed since the death of Tolstoy, the

memory of his teaching and achievements still live in our hearts."<sup>12</sup>

Tolstoy's contribution to world culture was highly appreciated by the then President of the Indian Republic, S. Radhakrishnan. In his message to the Tolstoy Anniversary Committee he wrote:

"Tolstoy exercised a great influence on modern thought and through Gandhi influenced our attitude to war and peace."<sup>13</sup>

"Tolstoy Week" in India was celebrated as a national occasion, as a festival of friendship of two cultures: Indian and Russian. This was renewed evidence that Leo Tolstoy was and remains a favourite writer of the Indian people. Tolstoy's name signifies also the eternal and indestructible friendship between the Russian and Indian peoples.

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12. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 19 November 1960.

13. Leo Tolstoy, 50th death anniversary, Nov. 21-27, 1960.











The Sahitya Akademi is very happy to publish, on the occasion of the Gandhi centenary, this comprehensive and valuable survey of Tolstoy's lifelong interest in India, and its philosophical and religious thought and traditions, his passionate concern for the freedom and welfare of the Indian people, and his contacts with many distinguished Indians and in particular with Mahatma Gandhi. The author, Mr. Alexander Shifman is a distinguished scholar and is Adviser to the Tolstoy State Museum. The material used in the book is based on authentic records available in the archives of the Museum.

We are grateful to the author for having offered the manuscript to Sahitya Akademi and to Prof. A. V. Esaulov for having rendered it into English from the original Russian.

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